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Adventure



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Contents for First June Issue, 1918

- The Trail of the Rabiscaws** *A complete novelette* Samuel Alexander White 3
Claude Gallinée has been waiting for the signal, and the moment old *Andrew Valmorin's* letter arrives he sets out. Before him the thrills of the great Northwest—X Y fur war, the long canoe trips up rivers and across great lakes—and a chance to settle a private score of his own.
- The Bully** J. Allan Dunn 32
 Cast breathless and almost senseless against the foot of a tree, *Harbin* will not acknowledge defeat, for although he realizes he is no physical match for "*Bully*" *Egan*, still there may be other ways.
- The Trouble-Maker of Ibbo** Thomas S. Miller 45
 The pagan belt of Africa with its savage natives, a French convict-outlaw, heat and fever, hold no terrors for *Rob Ault* until he meets the *Trouble-Maker of Ibbo*—then he finds what real trouble is.
- Young Johnny Eistedt** Kingsbury Scott 56
 Years of fighting the waves, erecting lighthouses and breakwaters, have made a grim fighter of *Old Man Tracy*. So when he takes a hearty dislike to the Government life-saving service, *Johnny Eistedt* knows it will be no simple task to change his mind.
- Disarmament** William Carlton Davis 62
 Chute Gulch would be a prosperous little town were it not for the staggering mortality rate. So *Joe Ruiz* produces a unique plan for lowering said rate. The result is amusing.
- Sirgarkh Rubies** Arthur James Hayes 71
 In the heart of the great Gobi Desert, in an old monastery guarded by miles of endless sand and throngs of fanatical Chinese desert-rats, lay the Sacred Rubies of Sirgarkh—but they have still another guard, one even more powerful than these.
- That Fool—Dave Hayden** Henry Oyen 82
 "That fool—Dave Hayden," they called him from one end of Alaska to the other. But perhaps if you had known old *Darragh Drake* you might have been as great a fool.
- Here's to You, Canoe!** *Poem* Richard Butler Glaeazer 89

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

Red Acadia	<i>A Four-Part Story, Part II</i>	J. U. Giesy	90
Wearied by the long-drawn-out council, <i>Elliott</i> decides upon a swifter way to gain his end. But the <i>White Wolf</i> has long ears and teeth which have not lost their strength. If you missed the first part of this thrilling story, you will find it briefly retold in story form.			
No Brains		E. S. Pladwell	112
The mystery starts when the Colorado express loses both her fireman and brakeman at Mesquite station—but it gets worse and worse the farther you go, until you will probably agree with the superintendent's verdict.			
Safe and Sane		Gordon McCreagh	120
Old " <i>Safe and Sane</i> ," the student aviators nickname <i>C. P. O. Rader</i> , and some even whisper doubts as to his courage. But perhaps when you finish this story you will be willing to leave Uncle Sam's airships under <i>Rader's</i> care.			
The White Moths of Vizgayan		Robert J. Pearsall	129
Whenever trouble has come to Vizgayan the white moths have come first as a warning—so claim the natives. So when the fluttering trouble-forecasters and <i>Lieutenant Harding's</i> troop arrive at the same time, the coincidence is significant to the superstitious native mind.			
The Winner		Norman Springer	139
"The Twins" they were in all save birth; they ate, slept, worked, lived together—and, naturally enough, courted together. When they finally realized that they could not marry, their tactics in settling the problem still bring a smile to the old Bering fishermen.			
The Red Witch		Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur	154
Terrors of ancient Sicily are these two outlaw brothers, <i>Odo</i> and <i>Sigismundo</i> , as much terrors to each other as to strangers. Only on special occasions, such as the one which takes them to Rocca Forte, do they sheathe their daggers and unite in common villainy.			
At Twenty Fathoms		Charles Brown, Jr.	167
After pearls <i>Downie</i> comes to the South Seas—after pearls and to forget. And in the lagoon behind Kora Pai he finds the way to both.			
The Camp-Fire	<i>A Free-to-All Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers</i>		182
Adventure's Free Services and Addresses			187
Ask Adventure			188
Lost Trails			191
The Trail Ahead			192
Headings		T. S. Tousey	
Cover Design		R. Farrington Elwell	

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

On May 18th you will receive it—the Mid-June Number—and the first story in it will be

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Vol. 17 **Adventure** No. 5

June 3
1918

The
**Trail of the
Rabiscaws**

by A COMPLETE NOVEL

Samuel Alexander White

Author of "The Wave Bound," "Ambush," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE DANGER CALL

CLAUDE! Raoul! An Iroquois canoe with a letter! It must be a message from Lachine or Montreal. Quick, *mes fils*, quick!"

The Widow Gallinée's voice rang from log house to log stable of her St. Lawrence River farm, and at the cry her two boys rushed out into the South Shore clearing that sloped to Lake St. Francis.

The steaming thaw of the Spring of 1804 smoked all the lake, and, a warm blot amid the ghostly ice-cakes, they could see a big birch-bark canoe, patently upward-bound, hanging under the trickling cut bank at the foot of the farm clearing.

In the canoe was an Iroquois hunter, his squaw, an elder daughter and two young papooses, together with all their worldly goods and household gods. The hunter, poised at full height in the craft, waved a white missive at the three, and with a shout young Claude dashed through the oozing

snowdrifts, through colorful patches of bloodroot, anemones and hepatica springing like magic in the moist black forest loam.

He threw himself face downward upon the bank, grasped the letter and sprang back to a safe distance from the margin.

Instantly the Iroquois canoe man likewise retreated, sheering his canoe off out of the path of the sodden earth slides that every few minutes swished into the dark, discolored waters.

"Me Thickfoot from Nachile," he called back in broken English, hopelessly transposing his "l's" and "n's," "that Varmoril, him brigade neader for Frelch Compaly, give him me. Me go fish up Nake St. Fralcis. He say me take; me take for you!"

"Good, Thickfoot!" acknowledged Claude. "Here's some tobacco!"

He drew two sticks of what the Iroquois prized from his pockets and tossed them across the water gap. So sure was he of hand and eye that he did not wait to see the tobacco fall upon the blanketed bundles in Thickfoot's canoe but ran back to his

mother and Raoul in the muddy dooryard.

"It's from Andrew Valmorin, brigade leader of the French Company," he announced breathlessly. "Andrew's at Lachine, and he got Thickfoot to deliver this on his way up the lake. What's in it, mother?"

The Widow Gallinée caught her breath with a sharp pain.

Presentiment, that is ever the occult gift of her race, told her what she had waited for through the wilderness years had come at last. Here was the resurrection of old tragedy, together with the danger call for one of her sons. Her faded, mystic eyes sunk in the brown face interpreted the portent of the message before she tore it open. Andrew Valmorin, now brigade leader for the Northwest Fur Company, but at one time her dead husband's retainer, would write of only one thing. So it was with no shock, indeed with no surprise that she read aloud in Andrew's bad English of the *coureurs des bois*:

Me, I'm in de close contact wit' Albert Chavignaud at last. He be wan of de head men now in de X Y Company dat's fightin' de Northwesters lak *diable*, an' he be goin' t'roo wit' de X Y brigades to Grande Portage at de same taim as ourselves.

So, *vraiment*, Claude must be come at once. He be better canoeman dan Raoul an' *aussi* more skilled in odder ways. He can be take service under me wit' de Northwesters, an' between us we'll be no doubt learn w'at must be learned ba de taim de Northwest an' X Y brigades reach de Kaministiquia post. *Mais* dere be no taim to lose. We be start on May de tenth. An' she's wan chance dat may not come again, for me. I'm be go w'ere I'm ordered an' after dis freightin' I'm might be ordered wan t'ousand miles from Albert Chavignaud.

I'm be speak to McGillivray 'bout Claude joinin' de company, so dere'll be no trouble dere. You be see, dey're anxious to recruit de strong, young men. Neidder is dere any chance dat we'll be lose sight of Chavignaud on de overland trip. For, *voilà*, I'm tell you he be greatly taken wit' wan cousin of McGillivray's—Margaret Ross ba name. McGillivray, he'll be in charge of de new Kaministiquia post w'en she's finished. Margaret, she's goin' t'roo wit' her cousin to help govern it, an' as we be travel—*mon Dieu*, Chavignaud, he'll not be ver' far away from dat girl.

Me, I'm at Lachine gettin' de brigades of canoes ready. De freight, she's been comin' down for quite wan w'ile now. She'll all be down before we be launch, an' we be launch in spite of *diable* on de mornin' of de tenth.

Comprenez-vous? Claude must be here on de ninth sure's *la mort!*

Votre ami,

ANDREW VALMORIN.

"And today is the ninth of May, mother!" cried Claude, the lusty youth of him vision-

ing a great adventure and missing the heart-ache of her being—the mother-yearning that would but could not hold him here on the shore of Lake St. Francis. "I must start at once."

"Yes, at once, Claude," sighed his mother in silent surrender to the inevitable. "Go into the house and get ready your pack."

"But, look," protested Raoul the elder—Raoul the heavy and stolid, keeper of the flocks and herds and tiller of the rough forest farm—"I am older than Claude, and it seems to me that I should be the one to go. We three know what we seek, and we know that the quest is a dangerous one. I think I should be the one to go."

"No, no, Raoul," Claude burst out impulsively. "Andrew Valmorin knows what is best, and he has called me. Besides, you must stay with our mother. You must keep the flocks and herds."

"But still," Raoul persisted, "it seems to me——"

"Let our mother say," interrupted Claude softly, his hand on Raoul's arm. "Her word on top of Andrew's. Are you content with that?"

Slowly Raoul nodded. The eyes of both sought the faded, mystic eyes sunk in the brown face.

"Claude is right," she decided. "Andrew knows whom he wants to gain his end. Claude must go!"

CHAPTER II

ANDREW VALMORIN, BRIGADE LEADER

FROM the edge of the clearing Claude took a last look back at the ribbon of farm along the lake-shore, sweeping up to the timber of the hills, at the log stable and whitewashed house with its whirring windmill a-top. Then he pushed on along the well-worn Iroquois trail, now skirting the South Shore's flooded margin, now climbing the heights where earthy blue overlaid the lake blue, and celestial blue capped both. The trail led him down into the Indian village of Caughnawaga, into a seething turmoil of bucks and squaws and papooses swirling about the tall black-clad figure of the village priest, Fontaine, like floods around a towering rock.

For these, the red children he fathered in the wilderness, were canoemen of the Northwest brigades, making ready for the

crossing of the river in the morning and the embarking for the West. Father Fontaine was their keeper, and he concerned himself with the immediate needs of the canoemen who were to take the long trail and the families that must be left behind.

"What now, Claude?" he greeted, as Gallinée threaded his way through the crowded Iroquois village. "Have you come down to witness the embarking, too?"

"I'm going to embark myself, Father Fontaine," Claude told him. "I'm going to enter the Northwest Fur Company's service."

Fontaine took him by both arms and stopped him in the cluttered trail, gazing gravely into his face.

"Then you've got word of Albert Chavignaud?" he deduced.

"Yes, he's in Montreal at the head of the X Y Company. Andrew Valmorin sent the word by Thickfoot for me to come at once. I've no time to lose, Father, seeing that the brigades start in the morning."

"No, no time to lose, my son," agreed the priest. "Nor have I, for that matter, and I shall not keep you. May Heaven guard you in your mission and give you success in the end. Is there any material thing you want, Claude?"

"Only a canoe to ferry me across the river, Father!"

"There's my own on the beach with my two Iroquois paddlers. Take it. Good-by till tomorrow, my son. I'll be across to give the fleets farewell in the morning."

He pushed Claude along the trail toward the beach and himself plunged again among the red rabble.

Silently the two smoky Iroquois ferried Gallinée across the St. Lawrence's surging currents. Drawn up on the Lachine shore, Claude could see long lines of Rabiscaw canoes being overhauled, and in charge of the work he glimpsed the familiar figure of Andrew Valmorin.

Straight and lithe as an Indian, Andrew poised on the shore, only the grizzled curls that hung over his ears and the puckerings of his bronzed skin betraying his age. His brown eyes, mellow as amber, smiled into Claude's as the latter stepped out and shook his hand.

"Well, Andrew, I got your letter all right, and here I am!"

"*Bien*," nodded old Andrew, "I'm know

Thickfoot deliver de message for sure, but if he ain't sent you here ba night I'm would gone for you. Ha! Ha! Wan word be enough, eh? You be here as fast as your moccasins can take you."

"I ran all the way, Andrew. How's the overhauling going on?"

"Ma Rabiscaw work be almost t'roo here, so I'm run on to Montreal wit' you an' sign you on wit' de Northwest Fur Company."

"Can't you sign me on now?" asked Claude impatiently. "You're a brigade leader. Can't you hire your own canoemen?"

Valmorin shook his head.

"*Non*," he informed, "de fight's got so bitter between de fur companies dat we ain't risk signin' traitors an' spies. McGillivray give de order dat he must pass on every man I'm want to hire. I'm spik to heem 'bout you. You'll get in de service for sure, but she's matter of form, you see. So we'll go on now an' 'tend to dat."

"What about Albert Chavignaud?" demanded Claude. "Is he here at Lachine yet?"

"*Non*, he won't be here till de mornin', but dose canoes yonder be his. Dey get ready same as de Northwest fleet."

Andrew pointed farther down the shore where another long line of canoes was turned bottom up on the rocks, hoisted on skids or staked in shaping frames undergoing repair.

"He has six brigades," commented Claude, running a practised eye over the crafts.

"*Oui*, an' fightin' crews if it come to trouble between de Northwesters an' de X Y men."

"Do you think it will, Andrew? Are there any signs that point that way?"

Andrew shrugged his straight, muscled shoulders.

"Ba gar, lots of signs!" he exclaimed. "*Mais*, who can be tell w'at de fur companies do next? De X Y competition be ver' bitter. *Vraiment*, she be hurt lak *diable* if de truth be whispered, an' McGillivray an' de rest of de Northwest partners be tryin' for amalgamation. Dey say de best t'ing to do is unite de two companies an' stop dis ruinous rivalry."

"De X Y concern, she's wan split off de old Northwest block, so dey say to put her back on again an' have some peace. Chavignaud he seem to be inclined dat way heemself on account of McGillivray's cousin

Margaret Ross. He be t'ink de *diable* an' all of dat girl! If she'll be marry heem, he'll be likely influence de company he controls to join in wit' de Northwest Company.

"Dat's de way t'ings stand now. De negotiations for amalgamation be goin' on, you be see. Dere'll be decision to join or not w'en we be get to Kaministiquia post in de West an' meet de Northwest partners from de Pays d'en Haut. But who's de prophet to say w'at dat decision of de two companies will be? Not old Andrew Valmorin, *mon fils*, so let us be on our way!"

CHAPTER III

THE NEW NORTHWESTER

IN THE face of a stream of freight pouring down to be loaded for the West they followed the Lachine road into Montreal and climbed up Beaver Hall Hill. Beaver Hall, the edifice that crowned its summit, was recognized as the most exclusive club in Eastern Canada, a club whose membership list was limited to thirty-five members, each of whom to qualify was required to Winter at least two seasons in the Far West.

Mighty politically, socially and financially, the Hall was the heart of the Northwest Company, the fountain from which its power pulsed, its headquarters of the East which maintained communication with the Kaministiquia post, its entrepot of the West, by the paddles of a thousand voyageurs.

Here the famed Northwest partners, McGillivray chief of all, held sway, and here, Valmorin knew, McGillivray himself was passing on the new men who were entering the service. He expected to find McGillivray alone, but as he swung open the door of his council quarters Andrew saw that he had calculated wrongly and he gave a growl of disgust.

"Ba gar, Claude," he muttered, "McGillivray he have de visitor we ain't be anxious to see. Look, dere's Chavignaud!"

Claude stared over the shoulder of the grizzled brigade leader and, sitting on either side of McGillivray before a long table heaped with documents, he beheld Albert Chavignaud and a young girl whom he knew must be Gillivray's cousin.

Chavignaud was a gaunt man, rough and angular, fierce as an eagle, with the weight

of fifty years in the slight stoop of his military shoulders. The brand of the raw land was upon him, the sear of the pitiless Winters of the West, his irregular features marred with ancient frost bite and his eyes affected by repeated attacks of snow blindness. But withal he had the cleanliness and the alertness of youth about him. From his close-shaven face a well-cared-for mustache pricked out aggressively and his coal black hair was brushed as smooth as silk.

So greatly Claude had yearned to face the man that he could not help but stare at length, and yet he might not gaze as long as he wished for the lure of the girl on the other side of McGillivray. She drew his eyes away from Chavignaud and held them as the magnet holds the steel.

Fresh from the Highlands she bloomed, her hair golden as the Highland moonlight, the loch shimmer still in her eyes, the heather dew still on her breath and in her cheeks that wonderful carmine that women of the isles ever bring across the seas.

Claude caught his breath, for after the eternal sight of red squaws and brown half-breed women, after even the brunette women of his own race, the sight of her was like the crimson flush of dawn, like the flash of molten sunset in his eyes. He stared, lost in the vision, so that it was Andrew Valmorin who broke the magnetic current that held his gaze.

"*Vraiment*, we'll be wait," growled old Andrew.

He went to back out and to draw Claude along with him, but he was a trifle slow in his decision. From his seat at the long table heaped with its documents McGillivray saw them and beckoned them to come in.

"Come here to me, Andrew," he ordered. "Whom have you with you there?"

"De new canoeman I'm spik 'bout," answered Andrew.

Reluctantly he led Claude inside, greeting Chavignaud with a measured nod and doffing his cap to McGillivray's cousin.

"Ah-hah! Promising material for a common canoeman, Andrew!" observed McGillivray. "Where are you from, young man?"

"From a Lake St. Francis farm, a habitant farm," replied Claude discreetly.

"What is your name? I guess Andrew mentioned it, but I've forgotten."

"De Gallinée is my name, usually Gallinée."

"It's a lie," Chavignaud rapped out unexpectedly, his seared eyes burning into Claude's across the table. "His name is de Bernay."

"How is this?" demanded McGillivray sharply, his grim eyes shifting from Claude to old Andrew and on to Chavignaud.

"His name is de Bernay," repeated Chavignaud belligerently, "and you will have to be more careful, McGillivray, or you need not expect me to come into your Northwest Company. *Voilà*, here's treachery under your nose. Else why does an offshoot of royalty sign on as a common canoeman?"

"Offshoot of royalty?" spluttered McGillivray. "What the devil do you mean by that, Albert?"

"He is none other than a direct descendant of the Bourbons. *Oui*, Comte de St. Jean of France, if he had his French title! Look at the Bourbon cast of countenance! Look at the Bourbon mien! Molded in the image of the Bourbon king, old Louis Philippe, McGillivray—or have you no eyes in your head to see!"

"By the voyageurs' stars, you are right about his looks, Albert!" agreed McGillivray, noting the regal carriage of the young man's frame, the handsome commanding features, the royal eye keen to observe and challenge. "I myself commented on his promising appearance, did I not? Comte de St. Jean, you say? Grandson of Duc de St. Flore, Francis de Bernay of France who emigrated here and joined the *coureurs des bois* in the fur trade?"

Chavignaud nodded fiercely.

"*Oui*, it is so!"

"And son of Louis de Bernay, your late Northwest partner in the same fur trade, Albert?"

"*Oui*, before the X Y Company was formed, McGillivray. Louis died at the hands of Isle à la Crosse Indians, you remember? Well, I heard even in the West that this young man was claiming a share in the transfer of shares when I left the Northwesters for the X Y. *Ciel*, more, he was swearing vengeance on me for a fancied crime. So, *voilà*, here he is with his claim and vengeance and trickery of signing where I might not know him. *Dieu*, yes, and when he comes sponsored by Andrew Valmorin one may well look out!"



"CHAVIGNAUD," cut in old Andrew imperturbably, "de lynx never start to speet till she's cornered! *Mais*, any way our business ain't wit' you dis moment. It's wit' McGillivray."

"But what trick is this, bringing him to me under another name, Andrew?" challenged McGillivray.

"Gallinée is my name," Claude explained, "my mother's name! My father's is de Bernay, but it is the custom for families like my own to take the mother's name. We do not carry our titles here. It is a new land, and a new land does not yield to titles. It yields only to men. I am Claude Gallinée. I want to take service under that name."

"Yet your own father kept his title here," reminded McGillivray.

"True," admitted Claude, "for he carried it from France. With me it is different. I was born in Quebec. I am a son of this new land. I am Claude Gallinée, I repeat, and it is under that name I wish to enter the Northwest Company's service."

"But I ask you not to sign him, McGillivray," warned Chavignaud heatedly. "I can see through his design. He has heard that I have come back from the West to consider amalgamation with you, and he is entering the Northwest service to dog me. *Mon Dieu*, I am not the man to be dogged. Don't sign him."

"Yet I shall certainly sign him, Albert," declared the shrewd McGillivray, who saw an opportunity to slip two strings on his bow. "If I don't, one of the other fur companies will, and he is too good material to let slip. He would be valuable to me as a clerk even now, but if he prefers to enter as a canoeman it is his own affair."

"I have warned you," reminded Chavignaud. "I will not hesitate to break with you. Nor with you, Mademoiselle Margaret!"

He turned swiftly on the girl.

"*Je vous aime!*" he declared passionately, almost fiercely, his frame quivering with the intenseness of emotion and anger. "But I love my independence and my freedom *aussi*. I will not be dogged. If your cousin signs Gallinée, I break with you."

Margaret's face flushed, but she eyed him quietly.

"My cousin knows his own business," she replied. "He signs whom he likes."

"Aye, and I sign Gallinée," boomed

McGillivray. "Here's your indenture, Gallinée."

He shoved across the table the form of service together with pen and ink for Claude to sign. The form set forth the terms of service, binding the signatory's allegiance to the Northwest Company, claiming his time night or day for the furtherance of its interests, defining his pay as thirty cents a day with tobacco, food and clothing provided and giving an option as to the period of hire.

"One year or three?" asked McGillivray.

"One year," stated Claude significantly, dipping his pen in the ink.

Claude's statement was like a fresh menace to Chavignaud, and the latter leaped up angrily from his seat.

"*Ciel*, McGillivray, have I not told you?" he shouted. "If you sign this man our negotiations are at an end. I am an X Y man still, and my company stands as it stands!"

"Very well, then, Albert, but you will have to come to us shortly," nodded McGillivray, coolly. "You can't bully me, and your X Y concern will be either absorbed or driven from the field. So go on and sign, Gallinée!"

Claude inscribed his signature and instantly Chavignaud turned his back on the table, strode swiftly across the floor and shut McGillivray's door behind him with a bang.

"Andrew, take young Gallinée to the warehouse," directed McGillivray unmoved. "We are short of men to pack the loads of freight and you will have to lend us some of your canoemen to finish up. He can find a place to eat at the company's expense at the Beaver Tavern on St. Paul Street."

Claude and old Andrew turned away, when as if in afterthought McGillivray halted them a moment.

"You do not carry your title here, but it seems fitting that we should tacitly recognize it," he told Claude. "Let me introduce you to my cousin Margaret Ross who is going to Kaministiquia post with us. Margaret, here is our new Northwester, Claude de Bernay, otherwise Claude de Gallinée, Comte de St. Jean of France!"

Margaret's eyes ran with approval over his mighty frame from his shoe-packed legs to the glossy waves of brown hair on his head, over a frame clothed in a cham-

pagne-colored blanket-cloth suit double-striped on front and shoulders by cardinal bands and sashed 'round with tricolored streamers that matched the red-white-and-blue wool cap he held in his hand. Then with a smile she arose and slipped a soft hand into his hardened palm.

"Claude Gallinée, I am glad to welcome you into the Northwest Company's service!" she greeted warmly.

CHAPTER IV

THE MONTREAL MAID OF THE CARNIVAL

ALL THE rest of the day Claude Gallinée toiled among a mob of men in the Northwest Fur Company's warehouse, packing the last goods for freighting to the West. Everywhere about him on floor and counters and shelves was piled a heterogeneous collection of goods.

As well as the indispensable provisions and supplies, there were materials that would be distributed among the Indians of the Pays d'en Haut in barter for their furs: cutlery, axes, ammunition, fishing lines and nets; rope, twine and thread; kettles of copper and brass; mirrors, beads, bales of cotton cloth and woolen blankets; fancy handkerchiefs of silk; carrot tobacco, twist tobacco; and topping all, the inevitable kegs of rum.

It was his task, along with the other Northwest men, to pack the trade goods into packages that a single man could handle on the portage and to label them with paint so that they might be distinguished easily by the packers. Each canoe of the Northwest fleet had its separate lading and each parcel of that lading its distinguishing mark. They began with the letters of the alphabet and when those ran out, supplemented them with numerals. Also they combined the letters themselves, the numerals themselves and finally both letters and numerals for the endless variety of markings that was necessary.

With each cargo as marked and apporportioned went a list for the officer in charge of the individual canoe to which it belonged. The officer was responsible for the cargo, his the duty of seeing that it was all loaded at Lachine and his the checking at every portage to prevent any package straying between Montreal and the Kaministiquia.

It was a mighty task, a furious rush at the last as evening drew on—scores of men

moiling in the dim depths of the warehouse filled with the rumbling echoes of voices, the swirl of dust, the smell of divers trade goods and the gleam of golden candles yellowing all. Claude drew a breath of relief when it was over and he stumbled away through the dark to clear his dusty throat with a draft of wine at the Beaver Tavern and eat a hearty meal.

While he ate he was aware of a great commotion in the town and when he came out again into St. Paul Street he found the whole place *en fête*. There was a light in every window, a bonfire on every street corner, music in the balconies and flags in the air. The spirit of carnival ran riot, the spirit of *camaraderie*, of celebration.

For in the May dawn of tomorrow Montreal would send its thousand voyageurs to the West. So in the May dusk of tonight she gave them gay farewell. The narrow streets were black with crowds that split and eddied around groups of gipsy maidens, maidens with their faces masked by varicolored dominos, their heads garlanded with new Spring flowers, their hands starred with torches to light their hoyden way.

Singing, dancing, they came, surrounding in a laughing ring, any promising young man recruiting at the eleventh hour to swell the strength of their cherished fur companies, promising each prisoned youth fortune, adventure and romance and throwing mock kisses in his face.

Before he was aware Claude was surrounded in St. Paul Street by a laughing circle.

"Whom will you serve?" they chorused. "Northwesters or the X Y Company? Look, there is a maiden for each! Which maiden will garland you and waft a kiss for your lips?"

"Which maiden?" laughed Claude. "Which is the Northwest maid?"

"She it is," they pointed out, indicating one who seemed to be their leader, one who wore a coat of gray wool and a red domino.

"Then she is the one to garland me," Gallinée declared. "But I fancy something better than the wafting of a kiss!"

In the spirit of carnival his arms went out and seized the maiden in the coat of gray wool, and laughingly he pressed his lips to the carmine lips under the red domino.

With a medley of mirthful shrieks her comrades pulled her away and ran, but the

red domino slipped aside in the crush, and Gallinée stood tingling, his eyes on the retreating group. Half in exultation, half in fear, he exclaimed aloud, for the face he had seen under the domino was the face of Margaret Ross, and the rapture of that daring moment was that he had felt her lips respond!

While he stared where the maidens had vanished in the crowd, uncertain whether to follow, a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder and whirled him 'round.

"W'at be happen you, Claude?" growled the voice of Andrew Valmorin. "Ghost-gazin' in de streets? Ba gar, I'm hunt you in de tavern wan half-hour. We be late now an' you ain't forgot dat leetle business we spik 'bout as we come along de Lachine road?"

"By heavens, no, Andrew!" returned Claude, quelling his fierce ecstasy and recovering his poise in a flash. "No, I haven't forgotten. Go on and lead through the crowd. I wouldn't have asked a better night for the work!"

CHAPTER V

MISSING X Y SHARES

INDEED, for ones bent on a mission in which they wish to escape notice there could have been no choicer night, with the clamor and shifting of the crowds in the streets. For men were here one moment, there the next, vanishing for periods and then reappearing unexpectedly without challenge or comment. And none in the general riot of the carnival asked where his neighbor had hidden or what he had been doing.

Thus it was under propitious circumstances that Gallinée and Valmorin wound their way through the merry maze, skirting the ground flares of the crackling bonfires and showing a preference for the intenser dark that rimmed the red flares 'round, arriving at last by a circuitous route before the mercantile house of Forsyth, Richardson and Company, otherwise known as the X Y Company.

Chafing under the stern business methods of McGillivray, Simon MacTavish and other Northwesters, these Montreal members had withdrawn from the company in 1795 and formed one of their own to include all the dissatisfied partners under the silent

sympathy of Alexander McKenzie himself. Since the markings of the earlier company were "N W," the new company chose the next two letters of the alphabet as their own and for nine years, up to the present year of 1804, they had used that brand.

Chavignaud one of the mightiest and most discontented Northwesters himself had readily joined it under circumstances that brought old Andrew home from the Pays d'en Haut with a tale for Louis de Bernay's sons. Old Andrew swore that the father of Claude and Raoul had quarreled with his partner over the secession from the Northwest Company to the X Y Company.

De Bernay was a loyal Northwester, and in the heat of argument and blows Chavignaud had shot him down in the camps of the Isle à la Crosse Indians. Also, Andrew contended, a loyal de Bernay's name was on the shares which were issued by the new company for the partners' stock in the old. De Bernay's family had one-half interest in the shares, which formed the controlling portion of the X Y stock, but Chavignaud drew dividends on the entire number.

Claude knew there was only one way to prove the truth and settle with Chavignaud. That way was to lay hands on the shares, see for himself if they were issued to the two men as partners, and act accordingly. That was what had brought him and Valmorin here to the X Y Company's headquarters, and here as at the Northwest headquarters all was toil and hurry. They were teaming their last freight to Lachine, sending it in sleighs down the snow roads that still held although the river ran free.

The little sleighs driven by French voyageurs bobbing under their caps of red wool arrived and departed continually from the entrance of the X Y warehouse, were loaded and dispatched with wonderful celerity by a mob of X Y men, and as they watched from a safe distance, Andrew Valmorin was suddenly struck with the full risk of what they had set out to do.

"Ba gar, Claude," he breathed, "she's bold t'ing to walk in dere wit' all dose X Y men around. S'pose dey mark us! Remembraire dere's law in Montreal even if dere ain't any at Kaministiquia. She's ver' bold t'ing, I'm say."

"I know it's bold, Andrew, but it has to

be done," declared Claude. "If the transfer of the shares is as we think, I'm going to have them, either now or later on. They'll be in either of two places, in Chavignaud's office or on his person. You said he had a small wall vault in his office?"

"*Oui*, I'm find dat out from wan X Y clerk dat he dismiss. Oak, hees wall vault be, iron-banded, but I'm never see de strong-box yet dat two queeck men can't go t'roo if dey're not seen!"

"You're right, Andrew, and we'll go through it," vowed Claude determinedly. "The fact of his having the vault shows that he stores some papers there. These'll be in the vault or on his person. And I'll wager he carries them on his person. He's not the man to leave papers of such value and contention in his Montreal office, but, you see, I have to be sure. I have to know they're not here before we start on the Rabis-caw trail.

"It's a risk as you say, but we have to take the risk of being seen at the work. Here's a solitary sleigh now. Stop the horse, Andrew!"

Jingling musically along came a red-capped driver in his little low sleigh, and as he glided up to them Valmorin stepped out suddenly and checked the horse by the head.

"*Comment?* What now, *camarades?*" laughed the driver.

He had been persecuted merrily by the tricks of rioters in the carnival. He thought this might be more of their pleasantry, but he was swiftly disillusioned. Before he had time to speak another word Claude had whipped him from his seat, rolled his sash 'round his mouth as a gag and tied his limbs with the lashing ropes of the sleigh.

Then they deposited the driver, corded like a sack, in a dark doorway and jumped into the sleigh.

"Quick, Andrew!" Claude urged.

Old Andrew slashed the lines over the shaggy horse's back and they slewed up with a *cling-clang* of bells at the entrance of the X Y warehouse.

The light was dim at the entrance. Men were in a blind hurry.

Before the sleigh had fairly stopped, bales were crashing in, and as if to shoulder their share of the loading Gallinée and Valmorin dived into the obscure depths of the warehouse.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE HOUSE OF X Y MEN

STEALING from shadow to shadow, from pile to pile of heaped-up freight, they made their way into a long corridor from which the offices of the different X Y partners led off. Many of the offices were still lighted and occupied though it was after midnight. These hummed with talk, but Chavignaud's, with his name painted on the door, was silent and in total darkness.

To and fro from the lighted offices men were coming and going constantly, partners on this or that business, the officers getting out their bills of freight, voyageurs and other canoemen hiring at the last opportunity. The presence of Gallinée and Valmorin could cause no comment, for, their caps pulled low so as to hide their faces, it would have been difficult to recognize them and in the hurry they might well pass for X Y men.

Loitering in the corridor and watching their chance when it was momentarily empty, they suddenly wheeled as they passed the door of Chavignaud's darkened office. Claude had his belt-ax ready in the pocket of his trousers, and swiftly he inserted the blade between door and jamb. The office being but a partitioned section, the door was not constructed to withstand raids.

Well within the central portion of the mercantile house, within the protection of its heavy, outer barred doors, it had only the ordinary lock that guaranteed privacy. Claude's strength levering on the handle sprung it quivering open, and in another second he and old Andrew were inside.

"Shove the door to, Andrew," whispered Claude, "and hold your candle a minute. Here's the wall vault!"

Chavignaud's wall vault was the usual one built within the end section of the office. Three sides of it were entirely inaccessible. The fourth side was formed by its door, ponderously heavy, of solid oak four inches thick, banded across by bolt-studded iron bands. The hinges worked from within. There was no opportunity to gain entrance by attacking the swinging edge and unhinging the whole affair, so Claude turned his attention to the lock.

It was of brass, massive enough to defeat

any skeleton key or prying chisel, but he had in mind another method of forcing it. He produced from under his blanket coat a long, slim steel auger that he had hung in his belt before leaving the Beaver Tavern in St. Paul Street. It was one of Andrew's augers, brought up for the purpose from the canoe yards at Lachine, and Andrew had chosen it with nice cunning.

Sharp as a razor, with an eighteen-inch handle of steel, it could withstand any leverage and bore to any reasonable depth. While Andrew trimmed his candle and shielded its glow under the canopy of his coat, Claude rimmed the brass lock 'round with a circle of preparatory rings and then one by one he bored them swiftly through. With all his great strength he worked, almost without noise, piercing the tough oak like leather.

At last, completely severed from the main body of the door, the massive brass lock came out in his hands and he shoved open the door.

"Almost bare, Andrew," he muttered, running the contents of the pigeon-holes and larger compartments through his fingers. "Pretty well cleaned out before his start up the river. I thought he wouldn't chance leaving them here in the office."

"Would he be leave dem anyw'ere else?" breathed Andrew. "Wit' anodder person, mebbe?"

"He wouldn't dare," declared Claude. "That would expose him at once. No, he carries them with him, and we'll see to that later. Just now we know what we wanted to know, and we must get out of here."

"Oui," growled old Andrew softly, "an' it can't be too queeck for me. Dere's footsteps in de corridor now—an' stoppin' at de door—*mon Dieu*, caught!"

Valmorin's last word was a click. Claude plucked the candle end out of his grip and pinched its wick between finger and thumb.

"Inside, Andrew," he urged under his breath. "Hide—quick!"

He grasped the brigade leader's arm and drew him within the wall vault, holding the lockless door shut by the bolt-heads inside.

There was laughter and scuffling at the office doorway, and abruptly the voice of Chavignaud rang through the dark.

"Here at last, my Northwest maid, and we'll see what kind of prize I've got!" he chuckled. "Though I thought I left the

office door locked—but maybe not! Well, if you'll quit your cat-scratching for a moment I'll strike a light."

THEY could hear his groping for the tin candle-lantern that hung in the entrance, could hear the rasp of his flint. Then the yellow flickering ray beamed through the dark full upon the vault door. Claude had managed to draw the lock, auger and most of the telltale shavings inside with him, but he could not hide the huge aperture in the face of the door itself. The upspringing light revealed it gaping like a sashless window, and, peering through it from the dark interior, Claude saw Chavignaud's glance fall upon it and fix there as if riveted.

"He sees, Andrew!" Claude gritted. "Jump for the office door!"

He threw wide the vault door as he spoke and, old Andrew at his shoulder, sprang across the office floor.

"Devils of the dark!" roared Chavignaud at the sudden apparitions.

He wheeled so quickly that he let slip his prize from his hands, and instantly the carnival maid he had captured sprang halfway across the room to meet Gallinée and old Andrew, tearing from her head, as she came, the gray wool coat that had swathed it and prevented her crying out before.

"Claude—Claude Gallinée!" she half-laughed, half-sobbed. "Take me away quick—away from that old devil of an Albert Chavignaud!"

"By heavens, Margaret—Margaret Rossi!" exclaimed Gallinée, astounded.

He stared a second at the golden tangle of her hair, at the blue eyes flashing opal fire, at the carmine cheeks glowing angrily with a heat like the heat of coals. Then he leaped with her across the floor in one great lynx-like leap to the doorway, his fist driving into Chavignaud's face and hurling him back against the wall.

"You dirty dog!" he gritted as Chavignaud went down.

"*Ciel*, you say so? But not a thief, *mon ami*!" Chavignaud choked as he struggled up. "*Par Dieu*, I have you now, Gallinée, you and old Andrew Valmorin. Here you are in your crime—breaking into the mercantile house of Forsyth, Richardson and Company. I will have you under arrest—in half an hour you two will sniff a pair of cells!"

"Ba gar, will we?" snapped the grizzled brigade leader, who, snarling like the dog-wolf of a wolf-pack, jumped for the doorway on the heels of Claude and Margaret. "Will we? But we'll be taken first, *mon vieux*! *Vraiment*, you'd be yell for your nearest partners, eh? Let dat shut your wind for wan moment!"

With his open palm Andrew slapped Chavignaud across the mouth as he ran and slammed the office door shut in his face.

Outside, the three rushed down the corridor and on through the warehouse to its entrance, but the little sleigh Gallinée and Valmorin had commandeered was nowhere to be seen.

"Ba gar," snarled old Andrew, "w're's she gone?"

"Some one's shifted it," deduced Claude. "We've been inside some time, and they couldn't load with the entrance blocked. By heavens, there it is—standing across the street! Quick, Andrew, jump up on the driver's seat and straighten out the lines. And you, Margaret—come up with me!"

Old Andrew vaulted like a stripling to the driver's seat, while Claude caught Margaret up and tossed her on top of the miscellaneous load of X Y freight.

"Where are you going, Margaret?" he demanded as he clambered up beside her. "Where were you going? Where do you want to be taken?"

"Beaver Hall!" she faltered, hardly recovered from her fright. "That's where I was going, Claude!"

"And Chavignaud—Chavignaud, the dog——"

"Yes, that was how he came to seize me. I was all alone, you see. I had left the fun of the carnival and was going back to Beaver Hall when Chavignaud rushed upon me from behind and rolled my coat about my head before I knew. I was to meet my cousin there after the carnival to go to Lachine. We sent on our baggage and were going to drive so as to be in plenty of time for the embarking at dawn."

"Beaver Hall, then, Andrew!" directed Claude impetuously, slipping one arm about the girl to hold her on the load. "Quick—there's the beginning of a clamor inside and the X Y men will be out here on the run. We have to find McGillivray before they catch us. Drive like the devil up the hill!"

CHAPTER VII

FAREWELL TO THE NORTHWEST BRIGADES

LUCKILY they did not have to ascend Beaver Hall Hill. As they made the turn at the foot of the slope where the road wound up to the Northwest headquarters they plunged full upon McGillivray himself striding down in his long Winter coat.

"Who's that?" he demanded sharply, peering through the dark at the sleigh and its occupants. "Is that you, Margaret? It's time we were off, and I was just starting out to find you!"

"Get in, cousin, get in!" importuned Margaret. "Chavignaud seized me out of the carnival and if it hadn't been for Claude Gallinée here I don't know what I would have done. Get in! The X Y men are after them, and Chavignaud is sending to the English governor for their arrest."

"The son of a cur!" anathematized McGillivray, leaping up. "Then you must reach Lachine before they do and crowd the embarking. Chavignaud has the ear of the English governor and the courts and his deputies will do his wish. The fleet must be away and then they can't arrest you. You hear? I have no wish to lose my brigade leader—no, nor the man who has befriended my kin. And by the good St. Andrew, girl, carnival or no carnival, license or no license, I'll see that Chavignaud pays for his pleasantry!"

Andrew Valmorin needed no further urging. He whirled his horse and whipped along the river road that ran to Lachine. The intenser dark was fading as they drove, the gray of the coming dawn filtering through so that the road and its immediate surroundings rose lazily into view.

Between the dark-blue St. Lawrence water on the one hand and the phantom fronts of stone houses and windmills on the other, they flew along, gradually drawing up on a string of sleighs that were teaming the last lading of the Northwest Company's goods down to the Rabiscaw canoes. Behind them they could glimpse another sleigh being driven at a furious rate, and McGillivray stood up, eying it suspiciously.

"Chavignaud!" he identified. "With a driver and two deputies of the governor, by their uniforms. By the good St. Andrew,

we've got to get past these sleighs of ours!"

It was the merry custom of the company's drivers to baffle the hindmost sleigh if it happened to be the sleigh of a rival concern or that of a strange traveler, keeping it in that position for the entire drive and foiling all attempts to pass. But at McGillivray's stentorian demand in his own name the Northwest Company drivers quickly edged into the side snow and made room.

"You see that sleigh coming on the run?" McGillivray called as they whizzed by. "Well, block it, you Northwest drivers. Take care it does not get past you on either side. And you yourselves make all speed to the canoe landing. The X Y people are after us, and we must have lead enough to load the last freight!"

"*Oui, oui!*" they chorused with ardor, swinging their whips in a volley of crackling and turning back into the packed road.

"Now, push a little faster if you can, Andrew," urged McGillivray.

"We'd travel faster if we were rid of this X Y freight," suggested Claude.

"Throw it out, then, Gallinée," nodded McGillivray, laughing deep in his chest. "It'll lighten the sleigh a good deal."



FASTER and faster they spun along the Lachine road, old Andrew Valmorin lashing wildly on the heaving, hoar-frosted sides of his ghostly beast, Claude Gallinée swaying lithely this way and that, casting the heavy X Y freight to the winds and the trail, McGillivray laughing hugely from the forward part of the sleigh and Margaret mischievously sliding the bundles to Claude with her dainty moccasined feet. The sleigh rocked and slewed so that, the last bundle heaved skyward, he balanced the girl in his hooped arms, his keen eye gleaming, his youthful blood a-thrill at the memory of her lips warm upon his lips in the carnival.

Behind them tore Chavignaud's sleigh with Chavignaud yelling for the roadway and ordering the Northwest teamsters to pull out. But they only shook their heads and laughed as in the spirit of the game they were accustomed to play.

"*Non, non*, take your time, *camarade!*" they shouted. "We shall be at Lachine in a short time. Besides, can't you see that the snow is getting worn so that the runners whine and bite? *Bon Dieu*, would you have us pull our traces out?"

Chavignaud cursed them and, seizing the lines from the driver's hands, reared to go past them in the side snow. Instantly a pair of the hindmost sleighs swerved out in front of him. There was a crash of wood and metal and a peal of laughter and shouting as Chavignaud's sleigh capsized and snapped its tugs.

"That puts them afoot," exulted McGillivray, "and gives us a little lead. Ho! Here we are on the slope of the beach. Out, all, and into the canoes. Hurry on that last freight, Andrew. Do you think there's time to load it?"

The brigade leader shook his head dubiously as he eyed the wreck of Chavignaud's sleigh in the middle distance and the darting figures about it.

"Not mooch taim," he decided. "We mebbe can't be get her all in, but we'll do our best, ba gar!"

A great crowd blackened the Lachine shore, all the families and relations of both Northwest and X Y canoemen come down to cry them farewell, and a brawny horde of the Northwesters bunched at the wave line. Most of the canoes whose bills of lading had already come through to the petty officers were loaded and afloat, the crews resting on their paddles awaiting the word of their bowsmen and steersmen.

"Launch dem all!" yelled Valmorin to the canoemen standing ready by the craft upon the shore.

He himself cast his lines to a spectator, jumped high over the heads of the ringing crowd, abandoning the sleigh that had served so well for the fleeter water travel.

"Here be de last freight," he yelled. "T'row it in! T'row it in anyway, I'm say. Dere ain't taim to sort. We be straighten out de bills of ladin' oop de river. *Mon Dieu*—wan sleigh, two sleighs, t'ree sleighs dere's no chance to load! *Allons, camarades!*"

At his command bronzed sinewy hands slipped the rest of the huge Rabiscaw canoes into the water and piled in whatever goods were tossed from the foremost of the Northwest sleighs. Like automatons the paddlers leaped to their places, bowsmen, steersmen, middlemen—French voyageurs off the Ottawa and its neighboring parishes. Iroquois Indians from Lake of Two Mountains and Golden Lake, Caughnawagas from their South Shore village dim in the Spring haze across the snarling water sweep!

"In wit' you, every wan!" shrilled Valmorin, as, last of the canoemen, he himself ran out McGillivray's canoe flying the bright Northwest flag and cushioned with costly robes of the silver fox. "Here be come Chavignaud wearin' out his moccasins on de lumpy Lachine road. Now, bowsmen, steersman—*oui*, squat your crew! Claude, you be paddle middleman. In, Margaret; in McGillivray! An' you Fadder Fontaine, yonder in de crowd, you be queeck or you'll be miss our prayer!"

"Yes, Fontaine," grinned McGillivray, "yours must be a short prayer this morning, thanks to the haste of Albert Chavignaud. Speak it quick before we start."



A HUSH fell upon the vast assembly on the Lachine shore and they reverently bared their heads as the priest's voice vibrated over the water in a brief word of prayer for the safety of the fleet. Then a gun-shot boomed in the stillness, and the uplifted paddles of three hundred and fifty voyageurs flashed in the first sun-shaft of dawn.

"*Vive la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest!*" they clamored. "*Au revoir! Adieu! Que Dieu vous benisse!*"

The paddles plunged as Chavignaud and the governor's deputies made the landing.

"Hold, there—stop!" Chavignaud panted. "You have two men with you who are under the law. Valmorin—Gallinée—those two! *Hôla*, McGillivray, give them up!"

"Come and take them, Albert," sneered McGillivray. "You have laid hand on my own kin, and you may look for no favors from me."

"*Bon Dieu*, you make it open fighting, then, and throw a challenge in my teeth? *Ciel*, you will hear from me when I have launched my fleet!"

"Our ears are open and you have our wake," McGillivray threw back, and, as at a signal, the whole band of Northwesters roared their grim defiance.

"Fortitude in distress!" they chorused. "Fortitude in distress!"

And, blending their slogan into the sonorous "Rabiscaw Chant" that drowned Chavignaud's ravings in their rear, they foamed away for the mouth of the Ottawa River with their lightning paddle strokes.

Full-lunged they blared as they passed:

Shackled children of the old lands, do the fetters
chafe and fret?

Do your feet grow numb and weary on the ways
your fathers set?

Do your rebel heart-strokes hammer for release
from bid and sale?

Bang your desk lid, close the ledger, strike the long
Rabiscaw Trail!

Are you sick of puppets preaching cant and custom
for a creed?

Have you cursed the cities' clamor, sighed for
silence that you need?

Art has aged you, court has crippled, creed has
gagged you, self has seared,

Go and breathe the Northland spaces where no
shabby soul's venerated.

Forest smothered, rapid broken, portage paved and
muskeg marred

Lies the trail your feet must follow, manly trail
because it's hard,

Breeding bone and brainy reason to replace me-
chanic text—

Hear the river voices calling? Have you hearkened?
Who's the next?

Come with no mistaken notion of the trail that
beckons you;

There are hardships, hidden dangers; there is toil
and death and rue,

Greedy gorges, reeling rapids, crashing chutes and
foaming falls,

But the Northwest feet have touched it and its
potent magic calls.

Flannel shirt for starch and ruffle, fad and fashion
bid farewell;

Nature's bronze for pulseless pallor, virgin forest
fare as well!

Far from artifice and fawning, far from tape or civic
code,

You were never nearer heaven than upon the lone
North road.

Leagues on leagues to tramp and travel, days on
days of wind and sun,

Every night the couch of balsam when the pipe of
peace is done;

On the Mattawan and Huron, Ottawa and Nipissing
Giant silver trout are jumping and a million ducks
a-wing!

When the blue-speared lightning's stabbing through
the blasted reach of pine

And the curling wave-crests cannon on the beach
like ocean brine,

When the thunder splits the heavens and the clouds
are painted black,

Earth's primeval pulse is pounding, driving you the
lost ones back.

Lo! She suckled you in season, fed you with her
choicest fruits,

Clothed you with her faith and reason, crowned you
with her attributes;

As a mother now she claims you, sons her savage
bosom bore;

Go and tread within her temple—here's the trail-
way, wide the door!

CHAPTER VIII

THE RIVER GIANTS

TAKING the Northwesters' pace, dupli-
cating their day's paddle or pack,
Chavignaud and his X Y men dogged them
all the way up the Ottawa from its mouth
to the branching of the Mattawan. By
day he kept them in sight upon the tu-
multuous waterway. By night his camp-
fires starred the fringing forest in close
proximity to theirs.

On the moist Spring nights when the
kiss of balmy winds tempered the last bite
of Winter, beaten back to the blue Lau-
rentian Mountains, the chansons of his
voyageurs rose in their ears. Also rose
the snarl of maudlin brawls bred of rum
about his fires, and, with every river league
they won, the bitter uncompromising en-
mity of the X Y adherents was impressed
upon each separate member of the three
hundred and fifty-odd members of McGillivray's fleet.

The outer fringes of the two rival fleets
began to come in contact day after day.
At first skirmishes took place between
single canoemen of the brigades, then fierce
contentions that involved whole crews.
Yet of this brawling and rioting McGillivray and Andrew Valmorin pretended to
take no heed. It was not their affair, they
sagely contended, if the canoemen chose to
get drunk and fight, provided only that
they did not impair their own efficiency or
were not missing in the morning when the
paddles came to plunge.

It was simply the warning rumbling of
the coming storm, the premonitory trem-
bling of the impending earthquake that
would hurl one company or the other into
oblivion. Chavignaud heard and felt it as
well as McGillivray, and he was equally
cautious about risking a general conflict.
In the bickering and brawling he delighted,
in giving petty annoyance to the North-
westers, in cunningly testing their strength
in fights of picked crews, in constantly keep-
ing them on the *qui vive* by his attitude of
challenge.

Yet for all his antagonistic, his often-
times boldly belligerent pose, he, like
McGillivray, was determined not to be
inveigled into a decisive trial of strength
except at the time and place of his own
shrewd choosing. Too much depended on

the clash. Too many fur posts in the far Pays d'en Haut would Winter on the freight the frail canoes carried, and, on both sides, it would have been a fool's decision to risk the loss of that precious freight in a moment's blind anger.

But, of necessity, it was the North-westerners who curbed themselves the more. McGillivray held a stern code over all the officers, and old Andrew Valmorin swore to dismember any Northwest canoe man who started trouble during working hours on the river.

As for Claude Gallinée himself, he lived the river life of the canoe men of McGillivray's craft, outdoing them all with the strength and skill of his youth. Though born and educated in Quebec, he had spent the greater part of his life on the Lake St. Francis farm, hunting, fishing, living the life of the wilds. He practically ate, slept and existed for months at a time in his canoe while the home-keeping brother Raoul tended the flocks and herds and tilled the soil of the forest farm.

And not only the rivers, the open highways of the raw land, were known to him, but the Great Lakes as well. He had voyaged even on Superior and had Wintered twice in the West, once in the Rainy River district and again on the Nepigon. Old Andrew Valmorin, than whom there was no more skilled brigade leader on the continent, had known whom he was choosing when he called Claude out on the Rabiscaw trail, and Andrew in his heart cherished something greater for him than the status of a middleman.

But for the time being he did the middleman's work, a work that was an ancient rime to him. With them he foregathered day and night, toiling with them, eating at their fires and sleeping under the canopy of the upturned Rabiscaws on the shore.

This was as it should be, for, though proudly born, his status was that of a mere middleman, and only his yearning eyes went across the camp space to the forest vision of Margaret, her golden fairness bathed in the glow of her cousin's fire. Till he took a step upward in the service that space must always intervene, and he wondered how long it would be.

Promotion, like hazard and death and the stroke of a rival corporation came swiftly in the ranks of the Northwest Company. Fortune had favored him at the outset,

and he longed to fan the fire of romance that the touch of a carnival maid's lips had kindled in his being that night in Montreal.

Montreal! It seemed very far away now. With their passing from the storied town other changes had come over the North-westerners. All the cramping laws and amenities of the East slipped away from them and against the forefront of a savage wilderness their hearts drummed up for the struggle, exultant as the hearts of their pagan forebears.



GREAT was the need to steel themselves for the turbulent Ottawa they voyaged matched its mood against their mood, brawling, smiting, hurling down its torrents to swamp them on their upward way. Treacherous Lake of Two Mountains; smoking Falls of the Chaudière; writhing, spitting nest of feline rapids called Les Chats! Yawning mouths of mighty gluttied tributaries—the somber Gatineau, the never-frozen Madawaska, the mystic, storied Coulogne. Vast green-canopied islands Calumette and Allumette set like shining emeralds in the platinum river rings.

Like a painted landscape the route wound before Gallinée's eyes, a landscape so vast that he might not glimpse it in a fortnight's gazing, a landscape vivified by the yellow Rabiscaw canoes, the bronze skins of the Indians and the crimson shirts of the French voyageurs blazing colorfully across its endless panels.

But at last they shot by the Rivière Creuse, up the Des Joachim, Roche Capitaine and Deux Rivières Rapids and reached the mouth of the Mattawan where the route turned from the main stream.

The camps of Northwesters and X Y men were close together as usual that night. As usual there was the nightly brawl, and in the morning as old Andrew Valmorin oversaw the launching of the canoes he came to McGillivray with a grave face.

"You be remember Chambly, de officer of de Simcoe canoe?" he demanded without parley.

McGillivray nodded briefly. The Simcoe canoe traveled immediately in the wake of his own craft. It carried one of the most important cargoes in the whole fleet and when they debouched from the French River it would leave the rest of the fleet

and skirt the Georgian Bay shore to the mouth of the Severn where was situated the head post of the Simcoe District.

"Ba gar, Chambly, he ain't be here!" intimated Andrew.

"Is that so?" growled McGillivray. "Then maybe Chavignaud knows something about him. Ho, Chavignaud!" he yelled to the X Y fleet that was just putting off, "I think Chambly went to your camp for our canoemen last night. Do you know where he happens to be now?"

"*Comment?*" laughed Chavignaud nastily. "How should I know. If he came to our camp perhaps he is there yet, and if you look over our camp you may find him."

McGillivray and Valmorin strode hastily across to the evacuated camp ground of the X Y men and looked it all over, even down the sloping rocks to the water's edge and there, half in the water, half out, they stumbled on Chambly with his head crushed in by stone or club.

"*Mon Dieu!*" gasped the grizzled brigade leader.

McGillivray said nothing at all, but his face grew black as a Northern blizzard as he gazed after the disappearing X Y brigades, and slowly turned back to his own camp.

"They've marked the Severn canoe," he told old Andrew as they started. "Chambly was a fighting man and they got rid of him at the first opportunity to make their work easy."

"*Oui,*" brooded Valmorin darkly, "an' now dey're gone ahead for de first taim to trap it at de French's mouth. It ain't take wan Iroquois to read dat sign. Who'll I be peeck to fill Chambly's place?"

"No one—yet!" counseled McGillivray. "We must not lose that Simcoe canoe. Watch the work of your canoemen from here to the mouth of the French and there pick the man who will run it through Chavignaud's X Y gantlet!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE AMBUSH OF THE SIMCOE CANOE

THROUGH the stormy Nipissing and the awesome French, they camped at the river's delta-like mouth. Across his own fire McGillivray talked with his brigade leader concerning the departure of the Simcoe canoe.

"Well, Andrew, have you settled on your man?" he asked.

"*Oui,*" nodded old Andrew, "he be wan of ma own crew."

"Call him to our fire, then!"

"Gallinée," summoned Andrew, "you be come here."

His heart leaping, Claude arose from the canoemen's fire and stalked forward into the glare of McGillivray's fire, his eyes resting on Margaret's face and refusing to come away though McGillivray's brigade leader was speaking.

"Chambly be gone," Andrew intoned, "and now I'm peeck new officer to slip de Simcoe canoe on her course. Claude, I'm peeck you. Take five voyageurs in anoder craft an' convoy dat Simcoe canoe till she's well t'roo de river mouth. W'en she's safe in de Huron channels, join de fleet again. You be understand?"

Gallinée nodded briefly, his eyes on the girl.

"Ver' well, den," Valmorin continued, "she be go on dis minute. Night's de safest taim. You give de X Y men de slip far easier in de dark. Dere's de Simcoe craft at de bank an' de empty canoe wit' your five voyageurs *aussi*, hangin' on her stern. Step in, *mon fils*, an' *bon fortune!* We troost we be see you again in de mornin'."

Old Andrew grasped his hand in a heavy grip of comradeship and Margaret impulsively caught his other palm.

"Don't fail," she whispered in his ear. "My heavens, Claude, don't fail!" Then aloud, and gaily, she gave him good-luck. "I know you'll outwit Chavignaud," she encouraged, blushing demurely under the scrutinizing eyes of her cousin.

"He has to outwit Chavignaud," growled McGillivray. "That's all there is about it. Remember, Gallinée, that Valmorin has picked you out of the best voyageurs in the fleet. His choice of an officer to lead them is a guarantee that the Simcoe canoe will go through. You understand? I can't risk my whole fleet in a convoy. I can't spare the men or the canoes. I don't want to precipitate a general battle afloat with the consequent chances of complete disaster. I can risk only one canoe, and you'll have to use whatever strategy will answer instead of strength."

"I'll not forget that," Claude promised grimly. "I'll put it through!"

He walked down to the waiting canoes,

and with a silent wave of their paddles in the firelight the pair of crafts shot away from the camp space into the dark delta of the French's mouth. Over far Manitoulin the silver haze of a rising moon was spreading, but the black shadows of the islands smudged the water like ebony.

In the deepest obscurity of the shadows, where they skirted the shore of White Moose Island in the outer bay, Gallinée gave a whispered command for his two canoes to land. Wonderingly his crews obeyed, stepping out like silent phantoms on the lonely lakeward isle.

"The packs!" he ordered. "Unlash and dump the goods in loosely. It's all lake travel from here to the Severn, and therefore you won't have to pack. I'll need the canvas covers myself."

In silence the canoemen carried out his directions, trimming the loose cargo under the thwarts and laying the canvas packs aside on the rocks.

"Now fill these canvas packs," Gallinée directed. "Stuff them tight with leaves and moss, and rock in the center for weight. And lash the waterproof canvas covers on so that the nature of the packs will not betray itself. Let no shred of moss or leaf peep from under the canvas folds. You understand? Do your work well. Much depends on it. Hurry up and pound it in."



IT WAS a full half-hour's work before the packs were finished.

Filling them did not call for such careful work, but roping the canvas covers over all, so that the contents would not be detected by the casual eye, demanded nice cunning. When it was accomplished Claude jumped up from an inspection he made mostly upon his knees.

"All full and fit to deceive X Y eyes!" he announced. "So load them into my empty canoe and shove clear."

As noiselessly as they had landed, they glided afloat again, the goods consigned to the Severn post in one canoe and the false packs of equal weight in the other.

"Slip outside yonder reef of rocks and head straight across the bay," Gallinée directed the six Severn canoemen. "It's only about five miles till you round the point, and after that you have the shelter of the islands. There's a heavy swell running, but the wind's gone down and you'll

cross all right. And when you reach the island channels, make speed! If nothing passes on the regular route, the X Y men may suspect you've crossed the bay and they might go down the channels in search of you.

"I have to keep on the regular route and draw their ambush while you get clear. When you hear a clamor, you'll know they're after me, and you must run the gantlet of the inshore water while it's empty. Don't make any mistake about it! When the X Y canoes start to chase me slip inshore below them and paddle like fiends for the Severn post. I'll see they don't double back on you."

With a salute of paddle-blades in the gloom the Severn canoemen plunged outside the protecting reef and vanished lakeward, while Gallinée and his own voyageurs held on the regular route. Somewhere among the thirty thousand tiny islands that studded Huron's north shore he knew the X Y fleet was lurking, somewhere very close to the river's delta, guarding the channel passage, but as if that possibility never entered his mind, he struck up an old French chanson to time his voyageurs' paddles.

A full three miles they paddled behind the screen of the islands, glimpsing between the isles as they passed the silver sheen of the bay now molten in the moon flux. Then in the narrow water-gate by the Wampum Rocks a sharp challenge shattered the rhythm of their canoe song like the sound of a shot.

"*Hola*, Northwesters—halt!"

It was the strident voice of Chavignaud, and before the rocks ceased to bandy the echoes of his cry a torch flared in the narrow water-gate and fired a beacon of dead branches piled ready on the Wampum Rocks. The quick flames leaped across the ebony water, illuminating the yellow canoes and the swarthy faces of the X Y men blocking the channel.

"Ha, ha! You Severn canoemen, we have your craft and goods!" laughed Chavignaud, flapping up like the old eagle he was in the bow of the foremost X Y craft.

But as he stood up, the glow of the lighted beacon struck the dim craft he blocked, and in the red flare he glimpsed its occupants.

"*Dieu*, paddling it yourself, Gallinée!" he roared out. "Quick, *mais mes*, it's the cursed boy himself!"

"Cast!" breathed Claude, reaching for the packs. "Everybody cast!"

In a rope-and-canvas shower they tossed the false packs on to the island shore and whirled the shallow-draft, broad-bottomed Rabiscaw like a floating leaf. Six ashen paddles bent and sprung and the lightened canoe leaped swiftly from the pursuing crafts.

"Paddle, *ciel*, paddle!" implored Chavignaud, leaning over the curved bows that hissed through the flame-carmined water behind them.

His own canoe was loaded with its customary freight, but so violent was the effort of his X Y men that he closed fingers on the Rabiscaw's high stern. Gallinée, in the steersman's place, felt the drag and whirled in a flash. The edge of his paddle blade crashed down on Chavignaud's arms. The Rabiscaw broke free and, distancing the loaded X Y craft, in a fresh surge of speed, rapidly lost itself in the dark maze of island channels that ran on to the French's mouth.

"Face of the Virgin! *Mais* that was a narrow escape!" breathed his voyageurs.

"Yes," exulted Claude, "but it was worth the risk. The Severn canoe's through the narrow channels and Chavignaud won't give chase for a cargo he holds in his own canoe bottoms, will he? Ha! Ha! Just wait till we sight him with those packs in the morning!"

CHAPTER X

FALSE LOOT

LIKE wallowing leviathans the Huron rocks bulked up at dawn, wrapped in gray and purple mists, blazoned by the copper shafts of the rising sun. As if carved out of gold, and running so evenly that the eye often deceived itself and accepted them as immobile, the fluted rollers undulated away to the North Channel of Georgian Bay.

Off its entrance, as they approached, the Northwest fleet could glimpse the canoes of the X Y men slowly making in. The latter had not gone into camp after their midnight ambushing of the Severn canoe but had held on their way, satisfied that though the canoe itself had put back to safety, it had been forced to abandon its cargo consigned to the important Severn post.

These packs they had not been ashore to open. So cunningly had Claude's voyageurs done their work in the substitution of the contents, so perfectly had they roped the canvas covers again that no trace of what they held was visible on the outside surface. Seemingly intact, painted with the lading symbols, they had not invited inspection at the moment of seizure. Moreover, Chavignaud had had no time to give them more than a greedy precursory glance and had ordered them thrown aboard with his own goods till he could find opportunity to open them at the Sault and appropriate their contents.

As the Northwesters drew near them at the entrance into the North Channel, some of the lashed packs were brazenly displayed in Chavignaud's canoe, some distributed among the other canoes, and Chavignaud could not forbear to hold on high a pack bearing the familiar Northwest marking, "S-16."

"Do you know it?" he taunted the men of the Northwest fleet. "And here are more. Do you know these?"

He stooped and groped for the rest of the packs his canoe held, shaking them in triumph.

"*Oui*, here are many more," he chuckled. "Look—S-A, S-R, starred, S *, double and triple-starred, S * *, S * . * —*voilà*, all the S's that maybe stand for Severn! *Comment?*"

A growl ruffled through the men of the Northwest brigades. They liked neither Chavignaud's taunting nor the sight of their own goods in X Y hands. Without a second look they recognized the stuff as the Severn cargo and immediately their voices rose in anger, more for the ear of their own leader than for Albert Chavignaud.

"Why are these Severn post-packs in X Y canoes?" they clamored ominously. "Aye, and where are the six Severn canoe-men who were brother paddlers with us?"

They had seen Gallinée go out empty with five voyageurs at the stern of the Severn canoe, but they had not seen him return, and Claude had ordered his men to speak no word of their exploit.

"Where are our brother paddlers?" they reiterated, their eyes turning on Claude himself.

"Never mind *them*," Chavignaud mocked. "The provisions are in my grip and they

will make sweet eating for my men at Grande Portage post."

"They'll find them pretty tough rations, then," laughed Gallinée from his seat in the silent McGillivray's canoe. "Open that pack in your fingers and see."

Chavignaud darted him a quick look out of his partially snow-blind eyes. Gallinée's challenge, together with the patent amusement on his face made the X Y leader sense a trick.

He stared at the pack in his hands, then suddenly ripped away the rope lashings with a command for the canoemen in his other canoes to do the same.

His own pack he turned upside down and shook it on top of his blankets. A shout of laughter from the Northwesters drowned his oath as the contents poured out. Their anger abruptly changed to derision, the Northwest men went into convulsions as all over the X Y fleet moss and leaves and weighty rock poured from the limp Severn packs. They roared in thunderous mirth so that not a whisper from Chavignaud reached them though his lips writhed and twisted and his face grew purple with cursing.

"Have you your answer now?" bellowed Gallinée, waving his paddle at the Northwest canoemen for quiet. "Where are your brother paddlers? Down past the Magnetawan's mouth, I judge, with the real cargo safe in their craft!"

Another violent outburst dinned in Chavignaud's ears. Overwhelmed by it, chagrined, maddened, his eyes blazed with a terrible light.

It seemed that he was about to order his fleet to charge down upon the Northwest fleet and give battle on Huron's golden sweep, but it must have been the very vastness of those waters that tempered his decision with sanity.

Only complete victors could ride that austere inland sea, and in a struggle both victors and vanquished were likely to go down to the caves of its icy bottom before full triumph could be achieved. So he turned with a snarling order for his men to dip their paddles once more.

"*Mon Dieu*, but wait!" he choked, shaking his fist back over his paddlers' heads. "Wait! You have not reached the Sault. You have to go through there yet and the band of Chippewa Indians I met last night tell me there is only one road!"

CHAPTER XI

THE GANTLET OF THE SAULT

THEY could not intrepert his threat just then but when they worked through the North Channel they began to have their suspicions. For the North Channel was full of floating ice with spacious shore-fields jammed by contrary winds and held there against the bosom of a Summerland.

"Can there be ice in our canal?" pronounced McGillivray, as the fleet passed up the river below the rapids.

"I'm wouldn't be surprised," brooded old Andrew Valmorin. "Mebbe dat's de word de Chippewa Indians breeng Chavignaud as dey pass, An', ba gar, we soon be see. Hold on, dere's Harvey on de bank! W'at's he yell? Lift your paddles, middlemen, till we be hear."

The fleet lay to, keeping mere headway in the current while Harvey the Northwest agent in charge at the Sault, ran hastily down to them.

"What's wrong, now, Harvey?" demanded McGillivray. "Ice?"

Harvey, a black-bearded man of forty, bronzed, taciturn, nodded shortly.

"Canal jammed in the floods! Couldn't blow it out! Stranded tight—ice, driftwood, boulders! It'll never move till we get the July heat that's due."

"Go and look, Andrew, you and Gallinée," directed McGillivray. "See if there's any chance of axmen hacking a passage through."

Gallinée and the old brigade leader leaped ashore and in company with the taciturn Harvey stalked off to where the Northwest Fur Company's canal circumvented the river rapids.

Involuntarily they exclaimed aloud at sight of a half-mile of solid ice. They could see that the jam at the Spring freshets had been of colossal size, for the lock built within the canal was severely damaged and ice cakes were still tiered 'round the store and wharf at the canal-foot.

"Ba gar, de Jooly sun is de only t'ing to go t'roo dere, as you be say, Harvey!" declared Valmorin. "*Ouï!* Dat an' de Summer rain! So w'at be left, Claude, *mon fils*?"

"The X Y road!" growled Gallinée. "Chavignaud thinks we won't dare, but we're on dry land for the moment and we'll

dare anything. By heavens, we'll show him. Come on, Andrew, and let the men unload!"

All along, ever since the formation of the X Y Company, there had been trouble at the Sault. The river frontage whereon ran the portage road, was constantly in dispute. The X Y Company claimed it by vested right, but they had won it only by the brawn of their voyageurs' arms, forcing a path in a clash with the Northwest forces, while the Northwesters, by way of compromise, made shift with the canal and primitive lock which was now closed by the ice jams.

Landed first and already in possession of the portage road, Chavignaud and his men vigilantly watched the preparations of the Northwest men. Many were attending to the packing as usual, but Chavignaud marked fully one hundred without packs marshaling to the forefront at the call of McGillivray and Valmorin.

"*Hola*, there, McGillivray!" he yelled. "What are you going to do?"

"Do?" laughed McGillivray, thrilling at the prospect of conflict. "Why, what you X Y people did one time—and do it better!"

At this signal the one hundred Northwesters sprang forward, Andrew Valmorin and Gallinée in the forefront.

"But stop!" Chavignaud warned excitedly. "This road belongs to us. Remember the Montreal law has touched the Sault."

"Yes, and that's why you're getting a fist on your jaw instead of a knife in your ribs!" gritted Gallinée, staggering Chavignaud with a lightning blow.

The X Y leader went down backward, under the rush of moccasined feet, and the one hundred brawny voyageurs, Iroquois, Caughnawagas, Two Mountain men, Golden Lake men, all smashed together into Chavignaud's crowd of canoemen.



IT WAS true that the Montreal law had touched the Sault, and rifle-ball and knife were banned, but the very fact that they smote with their natural weapons lent the struggle greater bitterness. The silent ends of the rifles were not banned, and those hurtling butts, together with paddles, clubs, stones and brown, gnarled fists thudded in a tattoo that sounded above the voluminous shouting.

Men went down on both sides to be trampled underfoot, but somehow the Northwesters always seemed to carry their injured along with their rush. Gallinée had lost old Andrew in the crush, but at the head of his smashing vanguard he came tearing, tugging, smiting to the end of the portage road. In their impetuosity he and his Northwesters carried a dozen X Y men into the river and the rest, like a dam broken by an irresistible torrent, were swirled and swept to crumble in resistance like fragmentary masonry.

Hard on the heels of the Northwest vanguard came the panting packers, loping their hearts out in the terrific spurt, and after them raced the bowsmen and steersmen in charge of the Rabiscaws. Balancing the huge crafts on their shoulders, they darted over the cleared path, but even these, in the ferocity and tenacity of the fight could not get through unscathed.

Parts of half a dozen cargoes fell by the wayside into X Y hands, toppling from the backs of the fagged packers who did well to save themselves. While many a Rabiscaw had its gunwales battered and the rear-most craft was lost entirely and smashed to atoms on the Sault portage.

Still, they were through at last, bruised, bleeding, nursing broken heads but yelling their exultation, McGillivray in the line of the Rabiscaws, running under shelter between bowman and steersman of his own craft, guarding Margaret, slung up in the thwarts, with a long-barreled pistol that no Sault law might ban. The canoes were launching off haphazardly, the mixed packs swishing into the handiest craft as Gallinée, flushed and victorious, laughing and disheveled, bored through the muddle, snatched Margaret from her cradling canoe thwarts and deposited her in the canoe bottom as it righted on the water.

"My heavens, Claude!" she gasped. "What a fight—what a fight!"

"What else could it be?" he laughed. "You see, I fought for you. Yes, and we've given Chavignaud his fill!"

He leaped aboard beside her with McGillivray but stopped as he went to kneel in his place.

"Where's Valmorin?" he demanded suddenly. "Where's old Andrew?"

"Here, *mon fils*!" groaned Andrew, pitched helplessly aboard by McGillivray's middlemen who grasped their lightning paddles

and sheered off. "Ain't it wan *diable* battle, eh? An' me—*mon Dieu*, I'm de pretty cripple! Should be leadin' de brigade an' can't lift wan paddle or stand on ma feet. See dat? Ma right ankle sprained and ma right arm knifed open from elbow to wrist. Steel! Ba gar, dat blade wasn't 'fraid of de law, eh? McGillivray, I'm cripple an' you better peeck wan new brigade leader to command dis crazy jumbled-ooop fleet."

"You pick him, Andrew," ordered McGillivray, elated at the Northwest success. "You picked right once and saved the Simcoe canoe. I'll trust your judgment again."

"*Oui*, you be say so?" chuckled old Andrew.

He tore up his flaming shirt into strips, soaked the strips overside in the cold water and calmly proceeded to reduce the swelling of his ankle by laving and to bandage the vicious wound in his forearm.

"You be leave it to me, eh? Den I'm peeck de same man. Gallinée! He's de best man in de fleet an' he be earn de position as well. You be mark heem? W'en I go down in de tangle at de head he kip on an' it be heem who force de portage. *Vraiment*, I'm troost heem to take us anyw're a canoe can nose. Claude, you be brigade leader of de Northwest fleet. I'm would group dose scattered canoes first t'ing an' sort out de ladin' afterwards w'en we camp!"

CHAPTER XII

KAMINISTQUIA TRUCE

OVER Superior's waste of rollers, past its red rock ramparts of storm, past the little trading-posts like Michipicoten that dotted its sullen shores, Claude Gallinée led the Northwest brigades in safety. Trained to the canoe and the wilderness from childhood, a born leader of men like his Northwest father before him, he finally proved himself in the long, rough, tedious passage across those legendary waters.

For the first time in the history of the Northwest Fur Company traverse no canoe of the brigades was swamped in the cruel surf, no canoeman went down to his last bivouac in the fathomless depths. It was a feat unparalleled in the records of the

fur companies, to bring Rabiscaws, freight crews and all through intact. The Caughnawaga Indians, themselves the finest canoemen in the world, and the tried Ottawa voyageurs murmured in wonder and turned their eyes on Gallinée as on a man who has achieved a miracle.

Nor were the Northwesters the only ones who profited by his guiding. In his wake came Chavignaud and the X Y fleet, too fearful of Superior's wrath to scorn the Northwest routing, and as he, too, came through intact, and, of a warm July evening drew up with the Northwesters at the Kaministiquia's mouth, he was moved to express his admiration.

"*Dieu*, you have a real brigade leader there, McGillivray," he admitted. "Though I do not like his disposition, I can't deny his skill. It is a pity our fleets can not always travel like that—under one guide and in safety."

"It is for you to say if they shall," returned McGillivray, accepting Chavignaud's evident attempt at parley. "If you have had your stomach full of bickering, very well! But remember no treachery in our dealings. Your acts have discounted any personal favor you might have had, but in the interests of my corporation I will traffic with you as head of the X Y Company."

"So if you have come to the point where you think of merging, now is your final opportunity. I meet the Wintering partners from the Pays d'en Haut ashore to-night," waving a hand toward the Kaministiquia post, "and you can state your terms before them. There will be either agreement or disagreement, explicit and final! What do you say?"

"You call a truce among our men, then?" asked Chavignaud.

McGillivray nodded.

"No Northwesters will lift a hand against your crews unless I give the word," he assured the X Y leader.

"*Très bien*, then," accepted Chavignaud. "You hear, *mes voyageurs*, *mes mangeurs de lard*," addressing the canoemen, "that we do not go on to Grande Portage for the moment? We land here under a truce and you will hold yourselves peaceably on the beach. It may be that we shall not go on at all as X Y men. *Voilà*, there may be but one company by morning!"

He waved his hand and the X Y brigades

turned quietly in to the Kaministiquia shore along with the Northwesters.

Formerly the Northwest headquarters was at Grande Portage at the Pigeon River's mouth and the route of their carry 'round the Pigeon's rapids ran within the boundary of the United States, but since the American Government had imposed a duty of from twenty to twenty-five per cent. on all Canadian goods taken over the Minnesota road, the Northwest Company had removed their Western entrepot from Grande Portage to the mouth of the Kaministiquia.

An ancient site, first trodden by the white feet of Radisson and Des Groseilliers, first timbered as a fur-post by the white hands of Greysolon Dulhut, a Wintering place for La Vérendrye himself, the Kaministiquia route from it through to the Winnipeg ran wholly in Canadian territory. Thus the duty could be avoided and the saving added to the trade profits, and the work of erecting the buildings was being pushed as fast as possible.

As far back as 1801 the removal from Grande Portage had begun, but it was not yet completed nor the new post renamed, though there was talk of christening it Fort William, after McGillivray himself.



IT WAS an imposing array of buildings Gallinée looked on as he led the combined brigades in—Northwest workshops, fur-houses, trading-stores, dwelling-places and a huge banquet hall, all grouped behind a high palisade. Mallets rattled feverishly in the banquet hall, evidently straining to put the finishing touches on for the meeting of the partners that night.

The place was crowded with wilderness men, all the regular post men and Indians together with more than a thousand Northmen from the Pays d'en Haut thronging in the evening dusk. Their drawn-up canoes yellowed the Kaministiquia shore like a forest carpet of Autumn leaves, and over the yellow canoes, over the shifting of the fur bales that had formed their freight, the blue haze of hundreds of camp-fires eddied in the breeze.

A great cheer and swirl rent the haze as the canoe brigades drew in. English, French, Cree, Ojibway, Iroquois, Salteaux, Chippewa and half-breed tongues of strange derivation clamored back and forth across

the water and up and down the beach as the Northwesters swarmed ashore and on to the post buildings bearing their backloads of freight.

Dorchester, in charge of the post, burst out of a busy trading-house to grasp McGillivray's hand and pinch his cousin's cheek.

"Ha! Ha! You are here safely!" he greeted. "And what is the word about the X Y Company? Absorption, maybe—seeing them here with our Northwest canoemen and Albert Chavignaud along with you?"

"We don't know yet," McGillivray replied. "Not till the partners meet tonight. Are they all here?"

"All here," informed Dorchester. "Here's the log of the post. You can see for yourself."

Dorchester darted into his trading-room and emerged again with his post record which he placed in McGillivray's hands.

"Read down from June the fifteenth," he directed. "All the arrivals are there."

McGillivray ran his eye down the entries that read:

June 15th—Sager and Boileau brought six canoes down from Fon du Lac last night.

June 16th—The Rainy Lake, Isle Portage, and Lake Winnipeg canoes arrive.

June 19th—Le Lary comes down with 24 packs of fur, 80 pounds to the pack.

June 22nd—Harrison arrives with 8 canoes loaded with furs. The sloop *Otter* sailed with these and other furs for the Falls of St. Mary.

June 25th—McKay arrives from the Swamp country.

June 27th—McTavish, McLeod and Grant arrive from English River and the Athabasca.

July 1st—Todd comes down from Fort des Prairies this morning, 10 A. M.

The entries ran on, a lengthy list, and McGillivray finished it with a nod of satisfaction.

"They're all here!" he declared. "And they'll be gathering in the banquet hall to meet me very soon. How are you getting along with it? Not finished? I hear the mallets going."

"It's all finished but the floor," Dorchester told him, "and I'm afraid it'll not be done for the banquet."

"But it has to be done!" decreed

McGillivray stiffly. "There must be some dignity to a meeting of the Northwest Company's partners, and we'll certainly not hold it on the ground. It has to be done, Dorchester, I say, so put on a double shift of carpenters—yes, or a triple shift since the time is short!"

"I haven't got a single additional carpenter," protested Dorchester in dismay. "My Sault men have all gone back to the voyageur settlement, and I'm left short-handed as you see. What under heaven can I do?"

"*Voilà*, then you can take mine," cut in Chavignaud as if eager to court favor. "Take my carpenters and rush it through. There are a score of skilled wood-workers yonder in my crews and to show you my good faith, you are welcome to them."

"By the gods of the Northmen, I take your offer, Chavignaud!" cried Dorchester, mightily pleased. "Never fear, McGillivray, I'll have it ready for you now."

CHAPTER XIII

CHAVIGNAUD'S COUP

DORCHESTER darted away to get the X Y carpenters, and soon the men of the rival companies were swinging mallets side by side, jesting, singing, pausing for many a mug of rum or racing at the floor-laying with merry camaraderie. All day the Northwest carpenters had dabbled with the rum. They were not fresh like the X Y men just out of the fleet, and toward the end they wobbled in a daze at their work, while their newly-made comrades laughed the more and plied them with the busy cups.

Nevertheless the work went forward with a dash, and though the X Y men drank the Northwesters down into the shavings at the last, Dorchester did not fail in his promise to McGillivray. At the banquet hour the hall was ready, the tables laden with the feast, topped by bottles of wine and earthenware flagons of rum. There was no time to clean the litter off the floor and bag it away, so it was swept into an open three-foot square pit left in the center of the floor for the underground pinning of the timbers. 'Round this opening in a vast quadrangle the tables were ranged, McGillivray's table decked with flowers and flags as the Eastern guest of honor.

With him at his table sat his fair cousin

Margaret, old Andrew Valmorin, dragging his lame ankle and still in bandages from the fight at the Sault, Gallinée, and some of the other officers of the fleet. Under the candles that starred all the tables were ranged the rest of the company officers, clerks, interpreters, guides, the famous figures Sager, Boileau, Le Lary, Harrison, McKay, McTavish, McLeod, Grant, Todd, Mangard and all the others; men from the ends of the Western earth, from the Nepigon, from Fort des Prairies, English River, Athabasca, the Swamp Country, Rainy Lake, Isle Portage, Lake Winnipeg, Fond du Lac!

Hobnobbing under truce with Chavignaud and his equally famous X Y officers, they ate and drank. Merrily the feast went on, and the only man with an anxious mind in all the vast assembly was Claude Gallinée. What did it mean, this move of Chavignaud's? Had he decided that he could not hope to cope with the Northwest Company? Or was he planning some treachery in a stroke all unexpected? He guessed that Chavignaud had not put Margaret out of his mind, and whatever stroke he directed against the Northwesters would undoubtedly include the girl.

Claude sat in torment all through the feast, the savory meat like ashes, the sparkling wine like gall in his mouth, and he drew a breath of intense relief when he saw McGillivray rise to his feet. The festive tumult slackened and stilled as the authoritative figure of McGillivray loomed up over the banquet tables, and all eyes kept shifting between him and Chavignaud, two mighty leaders of two mighty companies.

"Wintering partners of the Northwest Fur Company," began McGillivray tersely, "we are all assembled here once more for our annual meeting. The main business of the night will be the hearing of the returns of the many post-keepers from the Pays d'en Haut and the consideration of an offer of amalgamation from the X Y Company, whose head we have here at our banquet tables. In the last business is wrapped up much of the first, so we will settle it first. Chavignaud can give us his plain terms."

McGillivray sat down, and Chavignaud stood up with that poise that suggested an old eagle on his eyrie—lordly, vigilant, cruel—the candlelight flickering across his frost scars and partially snow-blind eyes.

"*Messieurs*," he bowed, sweeping the hall from end to end with a glance that finally came to rest on McGillivray, Margaret and Gallinée, who sat three in a row, "*messieurs*, McGillivray your leader of the Northwest Company has invited me to state my terms of amalgamation. So I will read first of all the report of last year's fur total which I have here in my hands. Since I have not been to Grande Portage yet, the report for this year is not available, but I promise you you will find it even better than the one I read. Listen, *messieurs*!

To flare some light on the sheet he held Chavignaud reached out to the center of the table and lifted the candle in his other hand, and Gallinée, watching him lynxlike with that vague distrust, slid forward on the edge of his seat.

Somehow Chavignaud's movement aroused Claude's suspicions and he held himself tense, his weight thrown upon his moccasined toes ready to spring at the first sign of treachery.

In his great harsh voice, like an eagle's scream, Chavignaud read his fur total which summed up—

3,124 packs of 90 pounds, including, along with lesser furs: 75,100 beaver, 4,800 mink, 45,000 marten, 4,400 otter, 60,000 muskrat, 12,000 ermine.



THERE was a murmur all 'round the hall at the mighty trade, and Chavignaud acknowledged it with a proud smile.

"Now," he went on stridently, fiercely, triumphantly, "to that trade I am going to add your Northwest trade, *messieurs*! *Ciel*, don't misinterpret me! The Northwest Company doesn't get the X Y trade. I am going to capture all the Northwest trade!"

"Ho! You are, Chavignaud?" laughed several of the Northwest partners. "And how are you going to swallow our company and our trade at a gulp?"

"By swallowing you!" countered Chavignaud swiftly. "By destroying your fine new post and annihilating you where you sit!"

McGillivray jumped to his feet at the head table.

"So it was only a mask of friendliness you put on tonight, eh?" he boomed. "And you choose to fight it out now? Very well, just start your destruction, your annihilation. I have one-hundred-odd officers

here. You have about the same number. And I tell you, Chavignaud, you are going to have a pretty time destroying so much as a plank of my post!"

"Yes, yes!" the Northwest officers backed him up. "If it is a hand-to-hand fight he wants, let him have it!"

Their fingers slipping down to their weapons in their belts, but still amazed at Chavignaud's boldness, wondering whether he had drunk too much wine or grimly joked, the Northwest Company men stared at his hard eagle-like face.

"*Oui*—destroy—annihilate!" they challenged.

"*Bon Dieu*, that I will, at a stroke!" roared Chavignaud.

His eyes flashed, implacable as the eagle's, and his right hand hurled the candle it held into the open pit in the center of the floor.

"*Adieu*, bold Northwest partners!" he shrieked. "You will hold your next meeting in hell!"

On the instant the watching Gallinée sprang, not at Chavignaud, but down into the floor-pit after the rocketing candle. As he sprang, he saw Chavignaud's other hand upraised as a signal, and at the signal a dozen X Y officers rushed to McGillivray's table. Claude had a momentary glimpse of them surrounding the table in a jostling ring, of Margaret and McGillivray poised on the bench seats in its center. Then all at once the huge hall was plunged into darkness—the remaining candles knocked from the other tables by X Y officers in every section of the room.

Through the dark the roar of savage voices and the scuffling of heavy feet dinned in his ears. Only the three-foot square floor-pit was phosphorescently aglow, casting little light beyond its blackly-outlined rim, and into the square of light he leaped with the agility of a hound.

He landed on his feet on the pile of shavings that filled the space between the timbers underneath the floor, a pile already blazing at the candle's contact, and furiously he began to stamp out the fire. But as fast as he stamped, the stubborn shavings smoldered afresh—pine and spruce and balsam, filled with resin and pitch; inflammable cedar and tinder-like birch.

How they flamed like a million little fiery devils in spite of all he could do! He stamped and stamped, his body half-way

in the floor-pit, his hands resting on its edge, and it was the very impetuosity of his efforts that caused him to feel some hard substance underneath the springy layer of burning shavings that he stamped upon.

With a sharp exclamation he scraped away the shavings with both hands and felt the curve of a stave underneath. A chill went through him, and he fell to stamping again with a bellowing shout.

"McGillivray, get Margaret out—get the men out!" he roared. "Powder-kegs—powder underneath—those cursed X Y carpenters!"

For he knew the X Y men had slipped the kegs in among the sweepings when the Northwest carpenters were too drunk to see!

There was a new rush and roar. The building rocked to the gush through its exits, while Gallinée danced like a fiend over the smouldering powder mine. He cursed the guile in the reckless camaraderie of the X Y carpenters, the guile that had drunk the Northwest men dead as their mallets and secreted the kegs beneath the refuse of splinters and shavings according to the word of Chavignaud.

And the handicap of it was that Claude could not get down at the kegs for the depth of the refuse to hurl them out. Neither could he hope to totally extinguish the pile of resinous stuff. All he could do was to pound the mass with his tread-milling feet, hold the fire inactive for the sake of Margaret and the rest and pray that McGillivray and his officers could keep her out of Chavignaud's clutches.

Dieu, what a stroke of Chavignaud's—to blow Northwesters and Northwest headquarters to hell at a single blast; to wipe them off the Western map and himself break for Grande Portage and the West beyond with the girl he coveted.

While he pounded, he heard voices near him, and through the phosphorescent spray from the burning pit he glimpsed crippled Andrew Valmorin leading a band of Northwesters to his aid.

"It's no use, Andrew!" he panted. "I can't get down to the kegs, and the three-foot space is too small for more than one man to work. Run and help Margaret!"

"But, you, Claude! *Mon Dieu*—"

"Go on! For Heaven's sake, go on!" vociferated Claude. "It was Chavignaud's plan to blow up this Kaministiquia post and

break for the West with her. 'I saw his officers surround her—by the god of Northmen, go!'"

Old Andrew crashed back through the dark, disordered place with his men to grope for the girl and her cousin. Gallinée could hear them calling for the two by name. *Dieu*, how he prayed, scorching prayers that she might get clear! *Dieu*, how he strained his ears for the last scuffle of the last foot! *Voilà*—there was the heavenly silence. Like a madman he vaulted from the floor-pit and dived headforemost through an open window.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SACK OF GRANDE PORTAGE

PANIC had cleared the ground about the banquet hall. Gallinée had just time to hurl himself through the palisade gate before the building rose on a geyser of red flame and collapsed with a thunderous clatter. Luckily the hall stood by itself, some distance from the warehouses, stores and trading-buildings full of the Northwest furs. There was nothing in the way of furniture in it but the tables and the benches and though the crimson rain of coals covered the stockade ground in its immediate vicinity; though the shock of the explosion broke every window within the circumference of the palisade, the rest of the strong post structures stood practically unscathed.

Around Claude on the fire-starred beach raved a mob gone mad, French and English, Iroquois and Caughnawagas, Chipewas and half-breeds—all the Montreal Pork Eaters and the North canoemen from the Pays d'en Haut—running this way and that and yelling for the X Y men's blood, when out of the maze of shifting figures hobbled old Andrew Valmorin. Andrew peered into his face a second and clapped a pair of swart hands upon his shoulders.

"Thank Heaven, Andrew, you got out!" breathed Claude. "And the others? McGillivray? Margaret—by the wilderness gods, speak, man!"

"Dey're—dey're gone; dough, ba gar, Claude, it hurts me to tell you dat!" stammered the old brigade leader.

"High heaven!" Gallinée exclaimed, his great frame trembling under Andrew's hands. "In the ruin? You mean—"

"*Non, non, not dat!*" interrupted Andrew. "Dey got out but dey must be

dragged out, McGillivray and Margaret. You see, I'm not find dem w'en you send me back t'roo de hall. De Northwest officers at deir table be struck down in de dark, an' Chavignaud an' hees X Y men be capture bot' Margaret an' her cousin. *Aussi*, Chavignaud must be ordered hees canoe-men to lie off de landin' wit' de X Y fleet all ready launched w'ile de supper went on. Den w'en de rush come, all he an' hees officers had to do was joomp in wit' de prisoners an' bend de paddles for Grande Portage!"

"By heavens, but he'll not stop there, Andrew, if we give him the chance to go on over the portage. He never intended to stop there but to head his X Y forces back into the Pays d'en Haut to swamp our ungarrisoned, keeperless posts. With all our keepers blown to the devil and all our North canoe-men here at the Kaministiquia, what was there to stop him?"

"He is going, Andrew, and Margaret is going with him to grace his headquarters and McGillivray to rot in his yoke unless we catch them at Grande Portage. We have to follow like the flash of lightning. Gather the crews together, all the Montrealers and the North paddlers, and launch after!"

Yelling for vengeance, the Northwest men took up his cry like an echo.

"The canoes! The canoes!" they chorused. "Launch after the X Y dogs!"

With a rush they bore the big Rabiscaws into the water under Gallinée's eye. It seemed natural, now that McGillivray was gone, that he who had slipped the Severn canoe through the X Y net, who had forced the Sault portage in the face of X Y might, who had piloted them safely through storm and swell over Superior's hungry waters, should assume authority, and even the Wintering partners, themselves bold leaders of men, fell in behind him without question.

They marshaled their own Northmen crews into their separate brigades, Sager's, Boileau's, Le Lary's, Harrison's, McKay's, McTavish's, McLeod's, Grant's, Todd's, Mangard's and all the others and foamed their blades in his wake. Only Dorchester and a handful of Kaministiquia men remained on the lighted beach, running backward and forward with buckets of water, quenching the smoking ruins of the banquet hall.

A brisk breeze blew from the east across

Superior and once afloat Gallinée ordered on the canoe-sails that were used for lake travel to aid the straining paddles. The X Y fleet could not be far ahead, and he thought to drive upon them across the heaving rollers, but evidently they, too, had hoisted sail, for, soaring and slanting under the wan starlight, they nosed in without sighting them behind the wooded island that screened Grande Portage Bay.

It was intensely dark, island, channel and crescent sand shore sable-blanketed by the thousand-foot loom of the mainland behind. Upon the beach no canoe-man's fire burned. In the black wall of shore and up-thrusting forest winked not so much as a firefly's gleam. Silence, dead, utter stillness seemed to further intensify the pall-like gloom. The only sound that came through the velvet Summer night was the brawl of the Pigeon chuckling maliciously to the grim Superior spirits that held in their keeping the powers of tempest and death.

"They've put out the post lights," breathed Gallinée. "Chavignaud must be inside. He hasn't had lead enough to get over the portage on us."

He leaped out on the cribwork canoe-pier that formed a landing and a shelter for the X Y fleets.

"Their canoes will tell the truth," he went on. "Let's see if they are here."

He leaned over the pier and, though he could not see even the surface of the canoe harbor in the dark, he could feel gunwale after gunwale of birch craft.

"All here and floating loose!" he exulted grimly. "No time to tie them. They heard us close on their heels. Come on, men. Rip this pier to pieces and we'll soon pry their palisade apart!"



CAPTAINING a brawny horde, he tore away a timber from the cribwork as he spoke, wrenched out the iron bar that pinned it for a weapon and shouldered the timber itself for a battering-ram. Nor were the Montrealers nor the Northmen from the Pays d'en Haut slow to follow his lead. It was a mighty band that followed on his heels.

Counting in the one-hundred-odd officers, the Montreal brigades mustered three hundred and fifty men. The Northmen from the Upper Country mustered twelve hundred strong. Under the combined attack of fifteen hundred and fifty men the

section of the stone-weighted canoe-pier that was exposed above the water came away piecemeal in their sinewy hands, and behind him Claude felt the crescent sand shore tremble to the thud of their racing feet.

Chavignaud, he knew, could muster only half his strength. The X Y brigades from Montreal were as strong as the Northwest Montreal brigades, it was true, but on his Grande Portage pay sheets old Andrew Valmorin had said that Chavignaud carried slightly over four hundred canoemen of the West. What he lacked in numbers the X Y leader had attempted to even up by surprise and treachery. Ahead, Claude could make out dimly the loom of the X Y post.

He was aware that it was strong and stanchly built, erected in 1795 by Alexander McKenzie, who, falling out with McTavish, had seceded from the Northwest Company and at first secretly, and at a later period openly, supported the X Y organization. Remaining in business even after the boundary was fixed and the American duty imposed, it still did a vast volume of trade in defiance of the Northwesters.

The post boasted the traditional stockade, which, in ordinary circumstances, was a formidable defense, but with a crash like an earthquake that woke the sleeping forest, it sagged under the great battering-rams of the pier timbers. The impetuous physical strength of fifteen hundred and fifty Northwest men crumpled it like matchwood and hurled it inward. A cry of fear, voluminous and terrible, burst from the stockade ground inside, a cry smothered by the rending sound of the barrier going down.

"The yard's full of men!" yelled Gallinée, leaping over the tangled palings. "Pinned under the palisade. Quick, Northwesters, quick!"

Ahead, in the center of the stockade ground, half a dozen torches flared redly on the post steps, and by the dim light they cast the rest sprang at his heels, jumping, slipping, staggering from pile to pile. Here and there rifles and pistols spat up through the chaos into the Northwest faces, but nothing could stay their rush. Their flailing iron bars, that they had wrenched from the canoe-pier, knocked rifles and pistols from X Y hands, cracked X Y heads wherever they rose from the jumbled palings.

By sheer brawn the Northwesters smothered them there in their tracks, cast the

heavy pier-timbers on top of the wreckage that jammed the stockade ground from palisade foundation to post buildings and, Gallinée at their head, swept clear to the steps of the fur-house itself.

Under the half-dozen torches Claude glimpsed Girard, the agent, and five of his clerks, but Chavignaud and his prisoners, Margaret and McGillivray, were nowhere to be seen.

"Where's your leader Chavignaud?" he demanded. "Where are the two he brought here?"

"Chavignaud?" laughed the post keeper with a great show of unconcern. "He is not within miles of here. These are but his men. While you amused yourself battering down my palisade, Chavignaud was getting across Grande Portage with his two."

"You lie!" snarled Claude flatly. "He hadn't time. The X Y men were only minutes ahead of us, for their canoes lay loose in the harbor. Chavignaud had to take shelter, and you can't send me across the Portage on a wild-goose chase. No, my lying Girard, Chavignaud is cornered in here!"

"*Dieu*, then you had better bring him out!" sneered Girard.

"I'm going to bring him out," declared Claude. "But first hand over your weapons to my men. That's it. Now, lend me your torch!"



AS HE spoke Claude plucked the torch from Girard's hand and sprang into the doorway of the fur-house. The lower part, heaped with its fur bales, was all in darkness. His wavering torchlight picked out no human figure, so he crossed to the stairs that led to the supply loft above.

"*Mon Dieu*, Gallinée," roared the voice of Chavignaud as he set foot on the first step, "so you did not go down in the ruins of the banquet hall?"

Instinctively Claude halted and stared up. In the trap-door in the floor of the supply loft, to which he had retreated as a last resort, crouched Chavignaud, pistol in hand, and in the yellow candle-light that filled the loft itself he saw the figures of Margaret and McGillivray shut behind the wooden grill that walled off the supplies.

"You are looking for your X Y shares

still?" snarled Chavignaud. "Well, they are here, *mon ami*," tapping his waist, "here in my money belt about my middle. But you will never have them, you cursed whelp of Louis de Bernay!"

Chavignaud's pistol blazed as he spoke. He shot to kill, straight for the heart, and only the fact that Gallinée was standing with the torch in his left hand extended outward and above saved him.

The heavy pistol ball crashed into his hand, flinging the torch from his grip, continued downward and grazed the skin of his thigh.

His wounded, useless left hand fell by his side. He wheeled to retrieve the fallen torch with his right, but the damage was already done. It had thudded fairly upon a nearby pile of fatty pelts. The fat blazed in a sheet of flame that enveloped the litter of bales and like magic it swept up the grease-soaked walls.

"*Mon Dieu*, now you've done it!" cried Chavignaud.

He hastily reloaded his weapon, then crouched in his former position in the trap-door.

"*Mon Dieu*, yes, you've done it!" he reiterated. "How *le diable* do you expect me to get McGillivray and the girl down out of here now?"

"Stand aside and I'll get them down!" cried Claude.

He sprang upon the burning stairs as he spoke and rapidly climbed upward, keenly watching Chavignaud waiting with his pistol at the top and the pale faces of Margaret and McGillivray staring through the grill.

"Gallinée, go back!" implored McGillivray. "The fire will cut you off. And you, Chavignaud, you dog, unbar this grill. I have no mind to burn to a cinder here!"

"Yes, for God's sake go back—or—or wait, Claude!" cried Margaret. "He'll shoot in a moment. Wait—the candle!"

"*Oui*, the candle—take it!" mocked Chavignaud. "The wall bracket's six feet from you and you're behind the grill. Wait, *mon Claude*—wait!"

Claude realized that Chavignaud was drawing him on to get a sure, close shot before he should throw open the grill and make a rush with his prisoners down the stairs. Yet he dared not go back for fear of the devilish heart of the man that might leave them to their fate. Only, he paused

a second, slowing his pace in the climb, for he saw Margaret spring along the shelves, piled with supplies, to the paddle-rack in the corner of the space behind the grill.

Chavignaud had his back to her, his seared eyes glinting along his pistol barrel into Gallinée's upturned face, measuring the advance of the flames below, his anxious finger itching on the trigger.

He could not see her seize a paddle as tall as herself, leap back to the grill, slip her arm through and strike swiftly at the candle bracket six feet away. But Gallinée saw, and, breathless, he watched her aim go true.

The swishing paddle edge smashed candle, bracket and all to the floor. The candle went out, plunging the loft into darkness penetrated only by the fire-glow beneath rising through the trap-door, and in that strange phosphorescent-smear'd darkness he leaped through the trap-door into the loft itself.

"Name of *le diable*!" he heard Chavignaud screech in his ears.

The pistol muzzle jabbed him in the neck and bellowed blatantly, but Margaret's coup had darkened the X Y leader's aim. Claude felt the bullet burn his skin, heard it thud into the door jamb behind as he clenched with the frenzied Chavignaud in the loft.

Truly Chavignaud was the old eagle cornered in his eyrie, fighting with demoniacal fierceness, striking, tearing, screaming as he fought; but Gallinée was the young falcon, full-fledged, of the dauntless heart. Chavignaud's clubbed pistol was raining blows on his head and face, yet, crouching in under his striking arm, Gallinée got a grip on the X Y leader's body and smashed his fist blows home.

His wounded left hand was useless for striking, but, with all his youthful strength, he clutched the X Y leader to him and with his right got a grip on Chavignaud's striking wrist. His iron fingers twisted in a desperate wrench. Chavignaud cried out in fierce pain as the bone snapped. His wrist and whole arm gave under the strain, and Gallinée, bearing the bent arm back behind the X Y leader's head, forced his neck down across his knee. There was another snap—this time of crunching vertebrae, and Chavignaud rolled limply on the floor.



THE flames were already shooting up through the open trap-door. Voices of Northwest men driven back by the heat as they sought entrance cried that the burning stairs had crumbled below. Claude sprang over and dropped the trapdoor in place, momentarily shutting out the flames. Then he rushed to the little window of the supply loft, kicking out sash and all on the heads of men beneath.

"One of the long pier timbers!" he shouted. "Hurry! For the love of heaven, hurry! Up-end it like a ladder for us to go down!"

Five-score hands plucked a thirty-foot square timber with the iron spikes still in it, from among the litter in the yard and up-ended it in the open window. Claude seized the end as it came up and steadied it to rest on the windowsill, yelling to the Northwest men to hold it fast.

"Margaret—Margaret! McGillivray!" he shouted. "Come on, now!"

He rushed across to them through the smoke, tearing away the outside bars of the grill, thrusting them to the window.

"You go first, McGillivray!" he urged. "Climb down. I'll lower Margaret to you on the spikes and drag Chavignaud's body with me."

He had barely time to turn back, snatch Chavignaud's limp form from the ravenous fire and slip down the spiked timber before the loft flamed up like a seething furnace. Against the foot of the improvised ladder he leaned, half-dazed, for the moment breathless, his eyes shifting from the Northwesters crowding about McGillivray to the limp, lifeless figure at his feet and resting on the buckskin belt encircling the waist under the coat, the belt of which Chavignaud had spoken. Then his senses came back, and he stooped and unbuckled the soft chamois-like belt with its money loops and document pouches.

With steady fingers he unbuttoned the pouches, drawing out some documents from the largest of the three. Under the fire-light that beamed the night like day he scanned them and saw what he sought—the X Y issue of shares, given in the place of Northwest shares and written in the name of Albert Chavignaud and Louis de Bernay, his father.

"Look, men of the Northwest Company," he declaimed, displaying them to those at hand. "Because my father was a loyal

Northwester, Chavignaud shot him down at Isle à la Crosse and weakened your corporation by the measure of these shares in a rival concern. Because I am a loyal Northwester, I bring them back in my father's name. You understand? They are mine from the hand of my father, Louis de Bernay. The only thing I'm doubtful about is my legal claim on Chavignaud's half-interest. Perhaps McGillivray here can clear my doubt. Does Chavignaud's half-interest revert to me?"

"Yes," McGillivray assured him. "Under the Montreal law Chavignaud has outlawed his claim on his half-interest by drawing dividends on the whole for nine years. The shares revert to you in their entirety. The same thing came up in a matter of the Little Company, and that is the precedent of the Montreal courts."

"*Dieu*, I had hoped so!" exulted Claude. "Then since these shares form the controlling portion of the X Y stock, I am in control of the X Y Company. I am the X Y. I merge the X Y Company and the Northwest Company on the spot, and these whipped X Y dogs, if they want to lift another paddle or shoulder another pack-strap can crawl to our feet for their crumbs."

A murmur of admiration shook the throng.

"By the good St. Andrew, you pile on eternal debt, Gallinée!" burst out McGillivray in vast gratitude. "But at least I can show you we are not ungrateful. Beaver Hall has only thirty-four members. We are a member short," pointing at the quiet form of Chavignaud, "the member we thought would join us again. So I propose Claude de Bernay, in his mother's name Claude de Gallinée, Comte de St. Jean of France in his place. Wintering partners of the Northwest Company is your vote in favor of it?"

"It is!" voted Sager, Boileau, Le Lary, Harrison, McKay, McTavish, McLeod, Grant, Todd, Mangard and all the rest in one breath.

"Then let us go back to Kaministiquia post and drink his health!" invited McGillivray.

A vociferous cheer broke from the crowd of Northmen as, leaving Grande Portage in its wreckage, they followed McGillivray down to their canoes. But Gallinée had no heed for their uproarious approbation. He stalked behind with Margaret and in the

semi-darkness of the crescent sand shore
before they reached the ruined canoe pier
he caught her close in his arms.

"Ah, my Montreal maid of the carnival,"

he exulted as his lips met hers, "it's the end
of the Rabiscaw trail!"

"Ah! my brave Northwester," Margaret
breathed, "it finds us together."

Just between the dark marsh and the rough, rolling
ridges

Where Superior's rocks lean down to the slime,
A dim trail leads over mossed log bridges

Through seas of sedges and willow and thyme.
It leads but no foot is there forward to follow;
No footstep may cross this lone path of the
meres

For the treacherous trail in the watery hollow
Disappears.

It leads, or led, to that lonely island

Vomited up from the vast morass;
From the lonely isle to its parent highland
None save the birchen-bark craft may pass:
Yet once there was passage, for there in the
clearing

'Mid birch of the mainland a fur-post stands,
And this fur-post of decades ago now is nearing
Time's demands.

It stands, or falls, by the swift Pigeon River,
Each black hewn window a wide-staring eye,
With eaves that shudder and doors that quiver
As the wail of the wandering wind goes by.
The wild wind's wail and the frail birches' weep-
ing,

These are the sounds that haunt the drear
place,
With never the sight of a waking or sleeping
Human face.

Only a moaning wisp of a creeper
Where the arbutus laughed with its leaves in the
wind,

Only Forgetfulness, Memory's keeper,
Dwells in the fur-post and woodland behind;
Out of arcades whose life was in seeming
No vireo calls through the cool forest aisles
With plaintive echos to waken their dreaming
Afterwhiles.

The depth of life and the fame of dying,
Here is its spirit if ever it was—
The bones of the brawny Northwesters lying
Where the gray wolf crunches his hungry
jaws;

None ever know, though they ask not for knowing,
If their ghosts still stalk by the broken bars;
Known is it only of North winds blowing
And the stars.

Where are the songs that rang out here of olden
Through sunshine and shadow, through russet
and green,

Through lips that rejoiced when the Northland was
golden

And overlords bold ruled the forest demesne?
Where are the songs and where are the flowers
That blossomed and bled o'er the hearts they
caressed,

And where are the treasures of love's sweet
bowers

Which seemed best?

Where is the tale of the Northland's springing,
And where the goal that their great hearts
attained,

And where are their clarion cries a-ringing,
And where the charms with which Nature en-
chained?

Where is the end that is never the ending
And why is beginning the end of to be?
Answer, faint echoes, Superior's sending,
Answer me!

Out of the past comes the ghost of the present
And out of the present the ghost of the past
And the dead sleep well, be they lord or peasant,
Though Life's long silence be broken at last;
Dreaming in sleeping or sleeping in dreaming,
Never shall waken the past of this scene,
Only of echoes that come as the gleaming
Of the green.

Echoes, sad echoes, far sweeter in sadness
Float from Superior over the isle—

I wonder if aught there can hearken with gladness
And turn to its sleeping again with a smile!
The dim darkness dwells where the white willows
withier

And the tune of the twilight falls faint on my ears,
The same sad sound that has stolen from thither
All these years!

The Bully

by
J. Allan Dunn



Author of "Turquoise Cañon," "The Sign of the Skull," etc.

CHAPTER I

MANZANITA

THE bulk of the big man was so admirably distributed about his well-proportioned skeleton, so slung and sheathed in elastic muscle and supple sinew, that he stepped out of the dim forest aisle into the sun-dappled trail as lightly as a buck, for all his eleven score pounds of solidity.

His tanned features worked with silent rage, crimson with the blood that hung there for the moment, stagnant in his swollen veins, but his pale-blue eyes were cold as shadow-ice as he thrust his left arm, hard as a stave of weathered timber, between the girl and young Harbin, forcing her, not ungently, to one side.

Then his right hand clutched Harbin's shoulder with the relentless grip of a cant-hook, dragging him off balance, to hurl him spinning and stumbling to the base of a sugar-pine where he sprawled, unheroic, embarrassed, furious at the superior strength that had swept him there like a windstraw.

"That's a hint for ye to leave my gal alone," said Egan, standing with his hands crotched on his lean flanks. "Next time I'll spank you."

Harbin shook off his humiliation and got

to his feet. His shoulder was bruised, he could feel a lump swelling at the back of his head as he clenched his fists and advanced warily, one thought regnant—to get home to the angle of Egan's superciliously outthrust chin. The girl darted between them.

"Dan! Mr. Harbin! Don't. Please, he'll kill you. For my sake, please, Mr. Harbin!"

In her stress she laid her soft hand upon Harbin's heaving chest. He saw the white fingers outspread on the blue flannel like a flower and felt their soft pressure above his pounding heart. Dan Egan put a sneer into a laugh.

"You mean for his sake, I reckon. I've warned him. If he butts in again, I'll make a mess of him."

"You big coward!" cried the girl, her eyes flashing, her young bosom palpitant. "You, 'Bully' Egan. How dare you call me your girl?"

"Wal, if ye ain't, ye're goin' ter be," said Egan easily. "An', till that's settled 'tween you an' me there ain't no one else goin' to have ye. Let alone a sneakin', spyin' whipper-snapper from the city!"

His cold eyes glanced mockingly at Harbin.

Harbin lightly side-stepped the girl's restraint and leaped at the giant, ducking his first flailing blow and landing a jolt to

the ribs with all his indignant strength. Inside the other's guard, he shot his right upward for the jaw. Egan flung back his head and Harbin's fist crashed against the bully's cheek.

He might as well have attacked the bole of one of the great pines that stood about them. Egan failed to even grunt and Harbin felt his mighty arms pinion him in a hug that threatened to flatten out his ribs. He sought desperately to tear loose the grip as he was swept up and off his feet, then smashed down against a stump where his bewildered consciousness flickered out as his head struck a root buttress.

When Harbin came to it was dusk. The smoldering fire of the sunset spotted and streaked the bases of the trees. His head ached intolerably. He put up an investigating finger and felt the swelling at the back of his head and a trickle of dried blood above his right ear.

His whole body was lame as he got to his feet and limped along the trail, his physical bruises nothing to the smarting of his spirit. He felt his face flush warm in the dark as he reviewed the ignominy of the brief encounter and called up the contempt that must have shone in Egan's eyes as he picked him up and tossed him to one side.

"Like a ten-year-old kid," he muttered.

Harbin was neither weakling nor coward but he had been served the bitter portion of the underling and his soul resented it, the mortification enhanced a hundred times by the circumstances. His manhood had been called upon, challenged in front of young and winsome womanhood—and found wanting. As for the girl . . .

"I suppose she's trailed with the winner," he cynically told himself and then mentally begged her pardon. "She had not seemed that kind of girl. She was not that kind of girl. Yet," he thought, "she might have sent some one back to look, if she couldn't come herself. I must have been out for an hour. He's too husky for me at close tackle."

Subconsciously, he admitted more than he permitted his brain to register. In any encounter the same thing would happen. Egan was a superman in strength, there was the difference of sixty pounds of hard flesh, bone and muscle between them, the difference between a sapling and a first-growth.

That was all Egan had, his superb, in-

tolerant strength. That and his logging lore. Harbin granted him that. There was no better woods-foreman in the Sierra than Egan. Yet, in a true accounting, Harbin felt himself the better man, in brain, in purpose and final achievement.



THE woods path opened to a clearing, man-made, in the thick forest. It was some ten acres, dotted with buildings of crude design, unpainted, of ax-hewn yellow pine and hand-split shingles. The mill loomed dark against the pond at the head of the long flume where the sawn lumber was held against its fourteen miles of mad rush down the mountain. Here and there showed squares of orange light in bunk-house and store, the sound of a phonograph floated up to him with the laughter of men. Supper was over. In the boarding-house Manzanita Wells would be clearing up the dishes for the camp flunky to wash. Presently she would come out on the porch—with Egan.

Harbin descended in the cool, screening dark and crossed the skirt of the clearing, back of the flats and trestles of the mountain yards and the dump, where the sawdust and slabs were piled in a mound that gave out a clean, resinous odor. The spices of wild mint and herbs rose from his trampling as he reached the stream that fed the flume-pond and knelt, sousing head from crown to neck in the icy water until it tingled with the reaction. Then he felt for his tobacco and a match and sat down to think it out.

The balm of the forest stole out to comfort and strengthen him. Far away, infinitely far, the crests of the higher Sierra

. . . lifted
Their minarets of snow.

Behind him, about him, rising from the clearing that seemed a ragged hole cut in green mantle, were the solid phalanxes of age-old trees, two—three hundred feet in height, fifteen to twenty-five in solid girth, trees that had sprouted from the cone-seed when Cæsar was rallying his legions beyond the Rubicon. Now, they were being felled to serve Harbin's own generation. Silently, patiently, through the stress of the centuries, wind and frost, fire and storm, they had achieved their stature and awaited their chosen end.

Pulling at his pipe to ease his empty stomach, Harbin reviewed the process; the careful selection of the forest giant, its calculated fall, the cross-logging and peeling, the dragging of the great sections to the cabled chutes, the whirring saws, the wild flight down the flume, the yards where they were transferred to the train, the cut of the carpenter's keen tools and so, at last, the place within the architect's appointed plan.

He loved the life by rightful inheritance. Three generations before him had been lumbermen, his lungs were made to breathe this generous, balmy air of the timbered highlands, his mind was instinct to grapple with the complex problems of the industry, to—some day—direct them. He was woodsman born.

He finished the second pipe, knocked out the ashes on his heel, scrunched any possible sparks into the turf and stood up, bare-headed to the night. The wind soughed through the trees with the sound of the far-off surf, the stars looked down kindly upon him as he went supperless to his bunk-house. Passing down the primitive street before the boarding-house, he heard the petulant cough of Matthew Wells and the grating laugh of Egan. But the girl was not with the two dark figures in tilted chairs.

In the general room the men were playing cards. The place was thick with smoke, the windows tight shut against the sweetness of the Summer night. Harbin went on up-stairs to his own cubicle and threw up the sash. The Great Dipper was wheeling on its polar hub toward the summit of Bear Mountain. The spicy wind seemed to penetrate him as an essence and he filled his lungs with great gulps of it, forgetting his aching body and sore head. Egan and the men below seemed very remote. The buildings of the logging-camp merged with the vastness of the forest.

There lay the worth-while game, in which these men were pawns, moved one square at a time to solve the problem. He—Harbin—would yet sit at the board. He squared his shoulders and sat in his rickety chair beside the open frame. He had come to the Mariposa Camp to fulfil a purpose. Egan had called him sneaking, spying. It was possible that he suspected the motive for his presence as timekeeper, sent up by the Bakersfield office. There

was more to the affront that afternoon than mere rivalry.

"And it will take more than Bully Egan to drive me from camp," Harbin told himself. "And Manzanita——"

As his match flared in his cupped hand held to the bowl of his pipe a voice hailed him from below.

"That you, Mr. Harbin?"

He made out the dwarfed figure of Tanata, Japanese houseboy to two of the bunk-houses, assistant waiter at the boarding-house, ostensibly run by Wells, actually managed by his stepdaughter.

"Yes," he said. "You want me?"

"I rike speak you one minnit. Suppose I come up?"

Harbin opened the door to him. Tanata held out an envelop.

"Missy give me this for you," he said in a low voice, and went silently down the hall to his own quarters.

Harbin lit his oil-lamp and read the message.

DEAR MR. HARBIN:

He said he would kick in your ribs if I did not come with him. I could not get away until after supper and then you were gone. I am so sorry and I think you were very brave. But please be careful with Dan Egan. He told my stepfather that he would see that you did not last long at Mariposa Camp. I do not think it is all on my account. I hope you will not blame me.

Very sincerely, your friend,

MANZANITA WELLS.

He read the note through twice before he burned it and let the wind carry off the ashes down the street. Egan's raucous laugh came up to him again, followed by the older man's half-senile, half-drunken, all-subservient chuckle.

Harbin extinguished the lamp. His eyes and lips, that had been tender, changed.

"His girl! Bully Egan's girl? I hardly think so," he whispered to the forest before he turned toward his bed.

CHAPTER II

THE FLUME WALKER

THE next day was Sunday, when the men started their holiday by a lazy rising and late breakfast. Harbin was up at six o'clock. There were some time-sheets he wanted to set in order against the pay-roll. The old clerk who had that in charge was fairly sure to be putting in a

few extra hours in the office and Harbin meant to offer to assist him. He wanted to get a glance at the pay-sheet totals, if possible, if not, at the annotations on the little Manila envelopes themselves.

This was a side issue from his main reason for having used influence to secure the comparatively lowly and poorly-paid job of timekeeper, but he believed it would shed a side-light on Bully Egan. It was to Egan that Harbin handed in his time-cards for O. K. before they went on the pay-sheets and he had a hunch that Egan was padding them. There were several indications at Mariposa of loose management, capable as Egan undoubtedly was, and, for these matters, there must be a reason.

Liquor was being peddled, none too secretly, by Manzanita's stepfather. The general room of Harbin's bunk-house reeked with the fumes of stale whisky and tobacco as he passed through it. Empty flasks on tables and floor were evidence. The thing was tolerated by Egan who, as a competent and interested executive, could not approve of it. And there were more important things in the wind. Harbin vaguely surmised them. He was there to catch them, pin them for display.

Tanata was laying the crude cutlery on the long tables when Harbin entered the dining-room. There was a noise of pots and dishes in the kitchen where the Chinese cook held sway. Manzanita was not visible, but the regular breakfast gong did not sound on Sunday until seven-thirty and it lacked an hour of that time.

The Japanese raised eyes in which friendship for Harbin flickered for a second.

"You rike trout?" he said. "This morning I get up verri earry, catch prenty."

"Sure thing, Tanata. I hope you used a fly, not dynamite."

"I rike wor-rum much better than fry. Dynamite I *no sabe*."

"That's right, Tanata," said Harbin, though he discounted the statement. "Dynamite makes too much noise, suppose a game-warden happens to be in the neighborhood. Bring on your trout. Give my respects to Ah Fong and ask him if he will put me up a lunch. Here are two respects for him and two for you."

He handed over four cigars which Tanata took with the quick twitch he used as smile. The trout came in, two rainbows that Harbin demolished in short order. Then

strong coffee and a package of sandwiches and, special mark of Ah Fong's favor, two hard-boiled eggs, a tomato and—rarer offering—a peach."

"Ah Fong says thank you verri much," said the Japanese. "This peach from his cousin orchard down berow Woodchuck Frat. He say, suppose you go near Woodchuck Frat today, perhaps you take one note to his cousin who give you smarr package to come back."

"That's just where I'm going," said Harbin. "I'll take his note." He suspected that the small package might be a fresh supply of opium but he was not arbiter over Ah Fong's petty vices and it paid to be in the graces of the camp chef.

At the office he worked over his time-cards for the week, docketed them and snapped a rubber band about them. As he finished, Thomas, the bald-headed old logging clerk, came in.

"Going on a picnic?" he asked as he spotted Harbin's package.

"Presently. Can I help you with your pay-roll? It goes down tomorrow, doesn't it?"

"Flume-boat special, tomorrow morning. Well, Harbin, you could help me and then again you couldn't. Egan seems to have taken a dislike to you. I'm sorry," he went on as he settled himself at his scarred desk, "I hope he won't get down on you unless your job is anchored at Bakersfield. But he can make it unpleasant for you and he has given me orders to see that you attend strictly to your own business and don't meddle with mine."

"He did, did he?" Harbin had almost hoped to hear something of the kind. "Well, I'm sorry, too, Thomas. As for my job, it will last until I am ready to leave it, Egan or no Egan."

Thomas shot a peculiar glance at him from his faded eyes and seemed about to speak but checked himself abruptly.

"Here he comes now," he said. There was a blotch high on his cheek where Harbin had landed.

Egan swaggered in, booted and spurred. He scowled at Harbin, then laughed unpleasantly.

"There's some liniment at the store," he said.

Harbin picked up his package and said nothing as he walked to the door. Egan exploded.

"After this you'll keep out of the office except in regular hours," he said. "As long as you're here—and that won't be after next pay-day."

Harbin gave him the least satisfaction he could, the sight of his back as he left the office. He was right. Whatever Egan's interest in Manzanita Wells there was more than that manifested in this suddenly open enmity.

He walked to the head of the flume and started out on the narrow plank that paralleled it. The well-built, watertight V of boards was dry, the headgate shut. Only on extraordinary occasions was water turned in, save when the clamped bundles of sawn lumber were shot down to the lower yards. Sometimes the "flume-boat special," a craft built to fit the dimensions of the flume, was sent to the office with documents. Once in a great while the flume-boat carried a man to the surgeon if there had been a serious accident. There was always a chance that the boat might jump the flume and there were positive rules against its general use by any of the men.

For fourteen miles the flume reached, rounding hill shoulders, straddling across ravine and gulch on high stilts like some mammoth caterpillar, its angle varying with the grades. The trip took less than twenty minutes of wild, cascading rush. Beside the plank road for the flume-walker, a telephone wire followed its course, with stations every three miles, whence the alarm could be sent in case of damage from fire or leak, or when the lumber, tearing 'round a curve, splintered or tore loose one of the boards of the V.

Two flume-walkers patrolled it, meeting half-way at Woodchuck Flat. Harrigan, superannuated Irish lumberman, had the upper end and it was to see him that Harbin made the trip. The man was garrulous and there was a question to be asked. Payment for it was in Harbin's pocket in the shape of a package of cigars. Harrigan would have preferred whisky, but Harbin drew the line at furnishing a patrolman with bottled drowsiness.

The way was shady for the most part, emerging now and then on a ridge where Harbin looked down to the valley, across the foothills to the distant ochre-colored plains, vanishing in heat haze. The flume followed the general contour save for here and there a giant stride as short cut across

a miniature cañon where a dashing stream sang on its way down. It crept out around bold headlands and turned back into the forest again where oaks began to mingle with the pines, and buckthorns and tawny-barked *manzanitas* that reminded him of the girl—"herself a woodsy thing for all her boarding-house surroundings, more fitted for a dryad than a waitress on rough men," he told himself.



WITHIN two hours he came upon the outbuilt shanty that housed the telephone. A man came out of it and tossed something that glinted into the gulch where it smashed upon a boulder. It was Harrigan, disposing of the carrier of the "morning's morning" he had saved from Saturday's debauch, with a toper's foresight. Harbin halted in the shadows long enough for Harrigan to go back to the shanty and come out again smoking his bowl-burned brier.

"Try these instead of a pipe," said Harbin, proffering the cigars.

"Sunday smokes," said Harrigan. "Ye're all welcome. I thank ye. Are ye goin' far? I'm on me way up. But I've time for a chat. The divvle knows 'tis lonesome on the flume." As he lit his cigar he looked keenly and quizzically at Harbin from behind the gnarled hands that screened his match. "Ye're lookin' fine," he said. "Not much the worse for wear. I hear ye clipped him one, at that."

"Meaning Egan?" asked Harbin, flushing a little. So, Egan had been talking. "Where did you hear that?"

Harrigan winked and jerked with his thumb to the shanty.

"There is me weekly an' daily paper," he said. "I told ye 'twas lonesome on the flume. Sure, whin I pass the time of day an' turn in me report, I ask for all the news. La-ad, ye should be carefu' o' that scut. Bully Egan, they call him. Ye've no more chanst wit' him than Benny Leonard has of winnin' the heavyweight champenship. Hard as a sound oak and a heart as rotten as birch punk. Ye need a gun to be even wit' the likes o' him. A bad heart he has, an' bad it'll be as long as it beats, bad 'cess to him!"

"What have you against him, Harrigan?"

"He's a divvle! Sure, he knows my weakness. A drap o' whisky for rheumatiz, I need, an' he sees I get me dram. Don't

he wink at Matt Wells sellin' it to us all, wouldn't he fire anny wan of us for drinkin' if he wanted to be rid o' us? Who'd believe us that told Egan saw we got it? Didn't he refuse me two days off to go to Tim Geoghan's wake, an' me wor-rkin' steady on the flume four years? Ah-r-r!"

The Irishman spat violently in the gorge. "He'll be cannin' ye, me la-ad, if he don't do worse. The divvle 'ud rather bathe in holy wather than Dan Egan w'ud stand for anny wan stickin' up to him an' gettin' away wid 'it."

"I'll try and look out for myself," said Harbin lightly. "You say it's lonesome on the flume. Don't you ever have any one pass this way or see them?"

"Divvle a wan. I meet Murphy twice a day an' the rist of the time I'm alone, baching it on the Flat. I've seen no sight of frind or stranger—savin' wan this mornin' an' he was barely civil—for a month o' Sundays."

"How not civil, Harrigan?"

Perhaps this was the clew he wanted, Harbin thought.

"He rides up at sivin o'clock on a strappin' bay, a bold-eyed, red-faced buck in smar-r-t ridin'-togs. I was scourin' me fryin'-pan outside the dump.

"Oh, me man," he sez. "Is this Woodchuck Flat?"

"'It is,' I sez, 'an' I'm the king of all the woodchucks,' I sez, manin' to be plisant, for I had a slug under me belt an' filt frindly to all min. 'Will ye have a bite of sup?' I sez. He looks at me like I'm the scum o' a ditch.

"'No thanks,' sez he, 'there's a Chinaman 'round here that'll give me brekfast.'

"'Wal,' sez I, 'if ye prefer a Chink to a white man, may the divvle fry aigs for ye before I'll keep ye from your choice. Good mornin'."

"I'll report ye for this," he sez. "Ye're insolent."

"No, I ain't," I sez. "Only particler. R-r-report an' be hanged to ye." So I got small comfort out o' that visitor. I must be goin' on, Mister Harbin. Are ye comin' back this way?"

"I am not sure, Harrigan. Good-by for the present, anyway."

"Good-by an' good luck to ye. An' watch out for Bully Egan."

Harbin pondered over the presence of the stranger. The man must have started

early to reach the Flat by seven o'clock. It was evident he had some appointment. The Chinaman—that would be Ah Fong's cousin—was expecting him or had been told to serve him. The orchardist was not running a restaurant. The stranger had threatened to report Harrigan. Egan was riding that morning. It all fitted in and Harbin hurried on to Woodchuck Flat. By the flume-walk he should make as good, perhaps a little better time than Egan. If there was to be a meeting he wanted to be as closely present as possible.

Another mile, and Harbin came out upon the beach known as Woodchuck Flat, close by Harrigan's bachelor shack. Here, on the sunny, southern flank of the range, Loo Chang had planted his peach and apple orchard. Harbin saw the Chinaman's cabin through the rows of fruiting trees. A spring had been dammed and a ditch reflected the blue sky; a single file of ducks, as necessary to a Chinaman as pigs to an Irish tenant, squaddling along the edge.

Harbin kept to the *madronos* and underbrush that edged the natural clearing. The stranger's horse, still saddled, grazed in a small corral. He kept a sharp look-out for the man as he worked his way around to the back of the cabin.

Loo Chang came out, bamboo pipe in his mouth, and squatted on a bench in the sun. Harbin cautiously reached a spot opposite to him and signaled. The Chinaman looked and came slowly forward, hastening as Harbin waved the note. He did not hand it to him until they were both well in the dragon-blooded bough-maze of the *madronos*. Loo Chang read up the ideographs and smiled.

"Ah Fong he say you fliend of his," he said. "All light, you all-same fliend of mine. You catchum one package to go back?"

Harbin nodded.

"What for you no want come along cabin?" asked the Chinaman with shrewdly puckered eyes. "Some one you no want see?"

"I want to see him but I don't want him to see me," said Harbin frankly.

He knew something of the Oriental code. Accepted as an ally by Loo Chang, the latter would not question his motives.

"This man here to see Egan?" he asked.

"Yup. You no likee Egan? You all

same like hear what for they speak? All light. Me no like Egan. One time, long time ago, in Beartown, I tly washee-place for mining man. Egan, he say he no like Chinaman in camp. He take me along my pahnteh, Egan and some otheh men they tie our cue, they tie our hand, they make us go out of camp all same clab, walk sideways, long way to nex' town. Egan he forget, he not know Loo Chang, now he plant um fluit. Loo Chang he not fo'get Bully Egan. —." And, as Harrigan had done, he spat his appraisal of Egan upon the ground and trod the spittle in.

"This man come this mo'ning," he went on, "he stop now my flont loom. I think maybe he no like lide hohse velly well," he grinned. "He lie down. You come stop along my kitchen. When Egan come, you all same can heah all they speak. That good to you?"

"Fine," said Harbin.

Loo Chang went first and signaled that the way was clear. Harbin stepped silently to the inner room of the cabin where a spotted cat sat beside the shining stove. The place was neat as wax. Loo Chang slid a bolt across the door and handed Harbin a Sunday paper.

"Me lead Melican a little," he said. "Mo' betteh I like look pictuah. You like?"

He spoke in a whisper, moving a chair toward Harbin. Then he went, closing the outer door and Harbin saw him seated on the bench, on guard.

He had barely glanced through the supplement when he heard the sound of horse's hoofs, and then Egan's voice and the stranger's in greeting. Through the thin planks every syllable was distinct.

"Well," said Egan, "I guess I've delivered the goods. Here are the estimates. It's a fine proposition, cut right, and I guess I know how to cut and how not to. When's the meeting, Mr. Holden?"



HARBIN pursed his lips into a silent whistle. So, this was Holden himself, manager of the Sierra Lumber Company, most powerful of associated corporations? The Mariposa Company had failed to pay for three seasons and faced a heavy deficit and grumbling stockholders. It was to find out the reason for the deficit that Harbin was acting as timekeeper. The Sierra had twice made a bid for the

Mariposa holdings, at a figure that would barely pay for equipment.

The matter was to come up at the next annual meeting, two weeks off. It was more than likely that, spurred by the stockholders, tired of no income, threatened with assessments, the offer would be taken and the Sierra acquire valuable property for a song. Unless Harbin presented positive proof of chicanery, of deliberate mismanagement.

It was easy for Egan, in virtual control, backed by certain of the directors whom Harbin suspected of being affiliated with, or bought over by the Sierra, to break up the proper correlation of the divergent activities of lumbering. Fellers, cross-cutters, swamper, chute-men, donkeymen, mill-men, all formed a perpetual chain that should be constantly moving.

Broken links meant instant loss of well-paid time. Deliberately careless choice of trees in relation to contour and economically erected chutes, a dozen lapses that only the trained eye could detect, would make failure of a venture that should be successful. This was the main issue, to which Egan's padding of the time-checks was a petty graft.

And Egan, mindful of his crookedness, was keen to suspect. He sensed that Harbin's caliber was above that of time-keeper.

Manzanita had fanned the spark of Egan's suspicion into flame. From now on, Egan would make every endeavor to rid himself of one he termed and feared a spy. The deal was too close for a slip. And Egan, Harbin realized, would stick at nothing. His own position was secure. The best of the board was back of him. He had only to get his evidence and hold out, then get his proofs in to the meeting in time.

This meeting of Holden and Egan in the Chinaman's cabin was pregnant and Harbin shifted his chair noiselessly until his ear was against the partition.

"I can trust these figures?" Holden asked.

"I'm not double-crossing myself," said Egan. "I have only your word, so far, that I get the job of superintendent and the bonus. If ye don't believe me, come up and see for yourself."

"I've risked enough in coming over here from Mr. Sears' ranch," said Holden. "I want to know if you are sure results will

back these statements. It is my responsibility, not yours, Egan. And you'll get your job—and the money. I hear there is liquor up at your camp? Understand, nothing of that sort goes with the Sierra."

"Am I a fool?" growled Egan. "I'm using it. Ye don't want the men seeing too much an' talkin', do ye? I know my business."

Holden made no reply and Harbin caught the rustle of papers. Sears was the president of the Sierra. He had a mountain ranch, really a country estate, on a spur of the range five miles away. Holden had not ridden so far after all.

"These read well, Egan," said the Sierra's manager at last. "What's *that*?"

A board had started to creak from the weight of Harbin and the balanced chair off its front legs as he leaned to the wall. Harbin instantly came back to the horizontal and scared the cat, which leaped upon the stove and, finding it still hot, fled to a shelf and knocked off an empty pot. Loo Chang looked through the window with a warning gesture and disappeared, to meet Holden at the front door. Some one—Egan—tried the door between the two rooms and Harbin blessed Loo Chang's foresight.

"Who's in the next room?" demanded Holden. "Who knocked down that pot?"

"I guess Chi Lo do that," said the Chinaman in bland tones.

"Who's Chi Lo? Let me have a look at him."

Loo Chang appeared at the back door with a nod for caution, captured the peeved feline and went off again.

"This Chi Lo," he said.

Harbin took advantage of the diversion. A field of shoulder-high corn waved fifty feet from the back door and he dived into cover just as Holden, with Egan, followed by Loo Chang, the cat now trailing its master, came 'round the cabin and investigated the kitchen.

"Chi Lo, he my cat," explained Loo Chang. "Plenty wood-lat he come in cabin, you *sabe*? Chi Lo, he see one on shelf. All same he jump, knock down pot. All time he do that if I outside. *Sabe*?"

The explanation was plausible, Loo Chang was convincing and the two men accepted his talk. Harbin stayed in the corn until he saw them ride off, Egan up

the mountain, Holden along the bench, westward, to another trail.

Loo Chang grinned genially as Harbin appeared.

"Those two men heap smaht," he said. "You and me, we plenty much too smaht. Chi Lo, he smaht cat, too." He patted the purring beast. "Suppose you like stop litty while, I give you fine lunch."

"I want to get back before Egan," explained Harbin. "Thanks all the same, Loo Chang. Ah Fong put me up some grub. Let me have that package."

He shook hands with the crafty son of Cathay as they parted and hurried back to the flume-walk, munching his luncheon as he went. Now he was in possession of almost all the evidence he needed to fill in his own statement, but there was his own side of the trouble with Egan to work out.

Matt Wells was Egan's creature. Will-sapped, incompetent, flattered by the foreman's friendship and protection, he would be willing to sacrifice his stepdaughter to his own convenience. Harbin's own feelings toward the girl, so out of place in her environment, crystallized as he thought of her situation. Egan had to be effectually crushed. A falsified pay-sheet—some envelopes that did not tally with the time-cards, those would place Egan beyond the pale. And his blood still tingled at the thought of Egan's insolent manhandling.

"No more chance than Benny Leonard has of winning from Willard, haven't I?" he thought as he glimpsed Harrigan far up the flume. "That's exaggerated at both ends of the line. He may lick me again but I've marked him once and I'll take another beating if I can make him know that he's been in a fight."

The mental side of him was submerged in the physical desire to prove himself. Manzanita did not entirely enter into this ache to vindicate his own prowess. He did not know whether he was in love with her or not. He had not asked himself the question. He wanted to save her from Egan and he wanted to do it in chivalric fashion, as a knight-errant might rescue a forlorn maiden from a giant of old—by force of his own arms. The quality of his youth and spirit made the issue paramount. To smash home, to parry and exchange, to grin and bear his beating and lash back again. . . .

Harbin was only twenty-five. As he walked fast to beat the upward jog of Egan's mount, he outlined the fight that he would wage, discounting the odds, only calming to maturer judgment with the climb and almost normal when he met Harrigan at the three-mile phoning station. The Irishman had been drinking again. Some one must have left more whisky for him at the shanty or given it to him at the head of the trail. He was in high good humor, smoking one of Harbin's cigars and treading the narrow plank with a rope-walker's agility despite a tendency to weave.

Harbin gave him scant greeting and an excuse to leave him. At a curve in the flume he looked back to see Harrigan still standing to wave a greeting. A bottle bulged from the Irishman's hip-pocket—part of Egan's plan of preventing dividends for Mariposa stockholders.

Ah Fong was waiting for Harbin, hovering anxiously on the boarding-house veranda for his panacea from all evils, his thin face almost wolfish for the drug. He had evidently been over-indulgent with his last supply. Harbin handed him the package.

"I heap thank you, Misteh Hahbin. I fix it all light, I get even with you. Loo Chang no send message?"

In the soft dust of the street Egan had turned the corner of the building unobserved, save for the faint jingle of the bridle that made Harbin turn his head. Egan passed on and his scowl included Ah Fong as Harbin realized that the woods-foreman had overheard the last words and knew that Harbin had been to Woodchuck Flat and at Loo Chang's. Egan was no fool, no believer of coincidence. Chi Lo, the cat, would now seem to him a specious subterfuge. He would make a counter-move. The thrill of the game came to Harbin as he walked to his bunk-house for a sluice and a change, wondering what that move would be.

CHAPTER III

FALLING TIMBER

LUCK was with Harbin Monday morning. He had come back from the woods with his time-books checked to find Thomas wrestling with the pay-sheet. The old man was convulsed with cramps that increased in duration, but he stubbornly resisted any effort of Harbin to assist him

until he had finished his task. Then, with Harbin's aid, he managed to get down to the flume-slough and saw his bundle of papers put with some other packages in the flume-boat and started.

"Help me to get to bed, boy," he groaned. "I'll lay up for the rest of the day. I've some cholery cure in my trunk. It's peaches on top of trout yesterday that did it. I ought to have more sense, at my age."

The first dose of the pungent stuff seemed to ease him, and Harbin left him, after pinning down the springless blind to keep out the flies. He cut over to the boarding-house and found Manzanita.

She looked unusually dainty and charming, Harbin thought, as he solicited her responsive interest in the old man. Some of her history he had learned: her father, civil engineer, killed in a breaking dam, her mother marrying Wells, temporarily flush from a mining deal, and then the gradual down-grade of rank and fortune until Wells, already shackled to liquor, became subservient to Egan.

Educated the girl was, refined with a shyness that had clung to her through all vicissitudes, as a woods-creature stays always shy, her eyes innocent, her ears facultied to refine the vulgarities that surrounded her, an air of loneliness about her that challenged, first Harbin's interest and now, as he watched her ministering to Thomas, something deeper, as he saw the woman, the helper, shining through the material envelop. Love was budding though neither yet saw the blossom, only thrilled to the sap of their own instincts rising to maturity.

Tanata had brought cold water and warm. He left the room in answer to a shout from outside.

"Mr. Egan wants you," he said.

The messenger gave Harbin rough directions and he started for the skid-road indicated, following an outcrop ridge that split the pines. The forest was quiet, save for the noise of a distant donkey-engine and the pert chatter of birds and an occasional Douglas squirrel. At the tip of the ridge he noted two sawyers busy on a pine, close to the wedging-point of their work.

Egan stood some sixty paces from the pine in the general direction of its fall, screened from the sawyers by lesser growths. To the casual eye he seemed in hazard, but Harbin knew how carefully the fall of a

tree was calculated, to a foot, in avoidance of crushing valuable timber or being itself damaged. Egan had, without doubt, marked the tree himself and laid its direction, base to the nearest chute.

The foreman was looking over some rolls of paper as Harbin came up to him. He motioned to the timekeeper to stand beside him until he had finished. The sawyers finished their task. Harbin knew that by the silence of the hissing saw and then the sound of the wedges being driven home into the cut. At last Egan looked up.

"There is no use you an' me bein' at loggerheads, Harbin," he said with apparent frankness. "They tell me old Thomas has got the colic and I'll need you on his work."

His tone was friendly but his eyes were cold. Harbin, looking at them, saw the hard pupils suddenly vibrate. The next second his quick ear caught the groan of the tree as it swayed, the sigh of its releasing soul. Still he suspected nothing. Egan was too clever at his craft to stand in actual danger though he delighted to show his nerve by being on the verge of it.

"He is trying to test mine," thought Harbin, and held motionless.

The crown of the tumbling monarch rustled above them. None warned them. In this crew of experts each looked out for himself. The sawyers could not see them. The swampers were working elsewhere. Suddenly Egan looked up. Harbin caught a flash of swift triumphant malice in his glance. The foreman's heavy hand bore down on his shoulder with resistless force, crushing him to the ground amid the brush as his voice boomed.

"My God, Harbin, she's on us!"

Harbin, his feet momentarily tangled, prone in the undergrowth, saw Egan leap for safety, clearing a dozen feet in a magnificent standing spring. For one awful moment he saw the pine, gathering speed, burning the air, crashing down upon him. He was trapped. Egan had deliberately sent for him and held him where he knew the tree would fall.

As he had once swirled to make an extra foot or so on the football field when downed, Harbin twisted with all the force of foot and shoulder thrust, rolling over and over, conscious of the rushing fate above him, of Egan, landing in safety, looking over his shoulder with a malignant grin.

The displaced air broomed him as the

great bulk of the two-hundred-and-fifty-foot pine, eight foot in diameter, thudded, upsprang quivering, then fell inert, while the ground shuddered and the sound of crackling brush slowly subsided. A broken branch grazed his head, the fork of a bough pinned through his shirt and held him as he essayed to rise. Egan ran toward him, his hand outstretched.

"Those fools miscalkylated, we might have both been killed," he said as Harbin refused his hand and, jerking his torn clothing free, slowly rose.

"Hardly both of us, Egan," said Harbin. "But it was a close shave. I'll be more careful in future."

The sawyers were running toward them. Other men were breaking through the brush. Harbin brushed off his clothes.

"Anything more you want of me, Egan?" he asked, holding the other's gaze.

The cold blue eyes of the foreman were the first to fall.

"Nothing," said Egan. "My fault, men, I guess I was careless."

Harbin was conscious of their eyes following him as he walked back to the office, shaken, striving to walk steadily, leaving Egan standing by himself, shunned by the rest.

In the office, half-mechanically, he began to pick up papers left by Thomas. Suddenly he remembered what Egan had said, though the foreman never intended nor expected to have his orders carried out. He had given Harbin the run of the office.

Harbin looked more carefully at the papers before him and his heart leaped. He held the rough draft of the pay-roll. A quick glance showed him he had uncovered Egan's padding. Swiftly folding the sheet, he thrust it into his undershirt, next to his skin. His work was over. He already had a report, compiled from his own observation, coupled with apparently aimless but skilful questioning, that showed where time had been deliberately lost, timber uneconomically chosen and felled, more left that should have been cut; enough, with the meeting between Holden and Egan, to make his case complete.

He could go down the mountain that night. The store manager had a buckboard and team. He would borrow that—commandeer it, if necessary. He had papers for authority in case of need.

Manzanita! Her face formed itself before

him and he made a sudden resolve. He would not go alone. He would take her with him. Even now he did not tell himself that he loved her. All that could come later. But he must save her from Egan, must make her understand her own peril. She had little love for her stepfather. He would explain his own identity, make her trust him, take her to Bakersfield, to San Francisco, and lodge her with his mother!

For an instant he thought of the flume in his desire to get away, to foil the Sierra outfit. But one flume-boat was already gone. It would take time to build another. It was doubtful if it would ride safely with a double burden even if he got one made and launched. And Egan could shut off the water on them! Thomas might remember the rough sheets of the pay-roll at any moment!

Quick thought jumped with action on his way to Thomas' room. Under the influence of the chloroform in the patent medicine, the clerk was sound asleep. As Harbin came out on the street he heard the heavy seethe of wind through the tree-tops. They were bowing their lofty crests about the clearing. To the northwest the sky was black. A storm was coming, one of the sudden, violent tempests of the high Sierra. It would suspend work.

He found Tanata and flung his question. "Missy? She go for pine-nuts. Pine Horrow."



HARBIN knew the place, a hollow where a glacial lake had dried. It was a mile away but the trail was plain. If the storm had started the girl homeward, he would meet her. The bright day darkened visibly as he hurried on, commencing to run as the gusts of wind moaned through the forest with the sound of breaking surf and a low mutter of thunder was succeeded by a long roll that seemed just above the tossing trees. A searing zigzag of lightning ripped the northern sky.

He reached the hollow, set with pines, inky-black in the weird half-light, and lengthened his stride, calling her name.

"Nita! Nita!"

He was running well, breathing easily in his almost perfect condition and he had spare breath to sound the name loudly, so that it echoed from the trees and the basin slopes. A sharp scream, following a blare of electric tumult, was cut short by

the thundering cannonade. She was hurt!

The light steadily faded so that he could barely pick his way. A few heavy drops of rain fell. He was among the thrashing pines now, the wind that was driving the rain harping among them. He almost stumbled over an overturned basket, jumping it in his stride. She was not far off.

A terrific fulmination filled the grove with blue light and a medley of shadows. There was another scream and, by the lightning, Harbin saw the giant figure of a man, bearing a burden in his arms. It was Egan—with Manzanita! She was beating at his face with her fists as she was borne shoulder-high.

Harbin felt a wild exultation. Something of restraint snapped within him. In the storm, his foe before him, his woman—with the breaking he knew now she was his woman—carried off before his eyes; he was the man primitive, endowed with a savage strength. He shouted as he caught up with Egan and tore at his arms in the darkness that enveloped them.

Another flash came and Egan, stepping back, set down the girl, who collapsed into a limp bundle at the foot of a tree. The rain was driving down heavily now and drenching them. They could barely see the loom of each other's figures.

"You ag'en?" said Egan. "This time I'll settle you for keeps, you——"

Harbin, leaping upward, smashed the syllables from his mouth. In his fury he struck so hard that Egan went reeling backward for a moment, Harbin following him up. It was too gloomy for scientific fighting—Harbin had no thought of it. If he could have found a club he would have used it and he knew that Egan would spare no dirty trick to maim and kill him. Twice Egan's arms wrapped 'round him and twice he broke free, gasping. One smashing blow he got in to the pit of the foreman's stomach and one sweeping buffet sent his own senses into dizzy confusion.

There is one advantage the smaller man seems to have in a fight. He is more dynamic, he coordinates more quickly. The rage that floods the muscles with spare resources of fibrin and makes for double strength was long stored with Harbin and now, suddenly released, gave him a power of hammering attack that, could it last, might cripple Egan before the giant's less sensitive mind and nerves could weld to

best action. It was Harbin's only chance. With every flash he exploded, springing in and striking. But the increasing rain broke up the statics and the thunder and lightning were passing.

A frightful blow almost broke Harbin's forearm, stinging, then paralyzing. His shirt was half-torn from his back. Once again Egan shook off the blow he gave him and Harbin felt the foreman's hands at his throat. With a sob of slacking speed he brought up his own arms in swimming action across his breast, wedging them between those of Egan and forcing them apart. He jumped back, and now Egan followed up, chuckling as he realized the fury of the attack was spent.

Harbin crouched and dived, tackling Egan about the knees, catapulting with all his weight. Egan's great fists pounded at him, between the shoulders, at the back of his head, blindly, as he went down. Harbin released as the giant fell and, in his turn, clutched for the other's throat, but there was no resistance. The foreman's skull had countered a stump hidden in the grass and he lay inert, the rain pelting on his upturned face. His heart was feebly pumping beneath one of Harbin's hands as he peered at the dim, still features. The dissolving clouds had grayed somewhat, though the rain threatened to last.

Direction lost, he looked for the girl, discovered her and ran toward her. Blood was covering his face, his upper clothing was rags, though the telltale pay-sheet had slipped down and, pulpy with the wet, was safely tucked beneath his belt.

"Come," he said. "Quickly, before he gets his senses back. Come!"

He spoke imperatively and she took her hands from her face with a little cry of horror and pity.

"I thought he'd killed you," she said, half hysterical.

"Not yet," said Harbin grimly. "Come on."

He took her hand and raised her to her feet, leading her past the lump of Egan.

"Listen," he said. "You must come with me. We are going—*now*—to Bakersfield, in the storekeeper's buckboard. Later to San Francisco, to my mother's."

"But——"

"But nothing," he said masterfully. "I have to go. I can not leave you with Egan and Matt Wells. You must trust me."

"I do," she said as they hastened along the back track. "I must go. He saw me from the ridge and he came down and—oh, I must go away. Will your mother——"

He interrupted the broken sentences.

"She will," he said. "Listen closely, Nita." It was the first time he had so addressed her, outside of his call. "My name is not Harbin—" he gripped her as she shrank back—"that is my mother's name. Mine is Armstrong. My father was the founder of the Mariposa Company. Its dividends were our income as heavy stockholders. They have ceased."

"I came up here to find out why. I have. I got the regular timekeeper transferred. I have been earning money in the city for both of us since I left college. Now we shall come into our own again. You are to come with me—to her. We can get there tonight. I will telegraph ahead. Now we must talk no more—and hurry."

He felt her fingers clasp his more tightly. She said nothing, but began to run with him.

Back in the pines Egan stirred, whipped back to his strenuous vitality by the rain. For a moment he put his hand to his head then, as recollection spurred him, jumped to his feet. He set his hand to his hip-pocket and drew out an automatic. With the pistol in his hand, he too, began to run, heavily toward the camp, murder in his heart, disgrace and failure keeping pace with him, plugging through the rain, a dull pain in his head half-blinding him.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN BARLEYCORN

HARRIGAN, taking refuge in the phone-shanty from the storm, swigged at his bottle of cheap, fiery liquor. His slicker was three miles down the flume and he made its absence an excuse to disregard his duty. The flume was in danger from the storm, from lightning, falling boughs. Regardless of tempest, he should be out patrolling it. But he had been reprimanded that morning by Egan for his words with Holden and he resented it the more deeply with every drink he took until his brain was sodden.

"Let 'er rip," he muttered. "To — wid their old flume."

The phone bell rang but he did not

answer it. It sounded again and ceased in the midst of its tinkling. The wire was short-circuited. He went to the door of the shanty and peered out at the billowing tree-tops lit by the lightning. After one flash that illumined half the heavens he heard the crash of a falling tree and the platform on which the flume was built shivered.

"That settles 'er," he said. "The old flume's busted somewheres. I'll look it up presently." And he went back to his bottle.

Later he came back to the door and stood there swaying. The road was only a few rods away from the shanty and he had caught the sound of a road-wagon driven furiously down-grade through the slop.

"Wunner what that ish?" he muttered, drained the bottle, went inside, started to seat himself and slid to the floor, where he collapsed into a huddle in the angle of the wall beneath the useless phone.

Egan's system was working.

Down the mountain Harbin—Armstrong now—drove the team that he had taken from the storekeeper's stable without wasting time to find the man. The girl had found a raincoat for herself and a slicker to cover his nakedness. The buckboard swayed and bumped over the ruts, but the horses held the road and the light was slowly coming back.

Egan reached camp where the men were still absent, sheltered in the woods. He found Wells, half-drunk, on the boarding-house porch.

"She's gone—with that dirty dog of a timekeeper," whined Wells, clinging to Egan's arm.

The foreman shook him off.

"Gone—where?"

"Down the mountain. They took Richard's team."

Egan left him, starting for his saddle-horse, then retraced his steps. That race would be too even. He must stop them—first for thwarting of this young devil's spying plans—then for his own revenge. The pain in his head was darting in searing

streaks and once he stopped, too dizzy and sick to go on. Then, with the roar of a wild bull, he lunged on to the flume-slough.

By the flume-gate clamped bundles of sawn timber were floating. He grasped a cant-hook and guided one to shore.

The next minute it was in the flume-head, the water-gate raised and, as the cascading force lifted the planks, Egan flung himself upon them and swept down the trough, his pistol back in his pocket.

They had perhaps ten minutes start, he reckoned. He could give them forty and still beat them. There was a place ten miles down the flume, just beyond the third phone-shanty, where the pitch was less steep. He meant to brake his impromptu boat with his feet as he reached the end of a long curve where the flume ran close to the ground, spill himself, creep down to the road—and wait.

He was traveling at a mile a minute on the surging flood while the rain poured in a heavy tattoo on his outstretched form, his chest a trifle uplifted, his neck outstretched, his bloodshot eyes searching the way ahead as the planks bucked beneath him, bumping at the curves, plunging on.

Suddenly, as he came to the commencement of where the flume straddled a gulch, his eyeballs bulged. The jagged end of a lightning-rent tree showed plain to his left, some débris of its fall still clung to the flume.

"Would he clear it? Or would it throw him and the planks out of the trough?"

Then he shrieked as he caught sight of the greater, more horrible danger. The falling timber had split the stout plank of one side of the flume. A long, jagged splinter, like a lance in rest, slanting slightly inward, was pointing at his heart.

He dropped flat to the planks, just too late. The sharp point entered his neck, penetrating deep, tearing the jugular artery before it struck bone and his body, spouting blood, somersaulted at the shock, hung for a moment, quivering and impaled, and then crashed to the ground, rolling down hill, rebounding from the flume-stilt and rolling on again.



The Trouble-Maker of Ibbo

by Thomas S. Miller

Author of "The Veiled Samaritan," "The Show-Down," etc.

SET me down for a Palm Oil Ruffian, as the monocled official asses of West Africa designate us traders who stand behind their salaries, or set me down Johnnie Macgregor, a common or garden variety of fool that sees easy money always in some favored spot over the horizon; else otherwise how would I come to be domiciled in that benighted stretch of country behind the Ivory Coast so unpleasantly dubbed the Pagan Belt.

Pagan Belt—ugh! Yet who am I to kick—wasn't she good for a two-hundred-percent profit barter business, leastwise till the Reverend Mark Whortle came into the country with his know-it-all religion and ran his bonehead against the ancient and sacred traditions and accepted gods of the heathen till said heathen, who up to then I regarded as my particular perquisite by right of discovery and pioneering, had no more use for a white man than a mother hen for a coyote. Lordy, I had those negroes bluffed into thinking whites were plus what Kaiser Bill thinks he is when he tells the world what he and God are going to do next in the kultur line.

Oh, I've got a proper grudge against Whortle all right. And if my kick against the missionary wasn't enough, bang if there didn't come right on top of his mischievous one, Corporal Joulaud; a deserter from French Sudan with a record that made his name a mammy's hushword to naughty children the length and breadth of Negroland. Bang went the last remnant of good feeling which I had been years upbuilding with the Montoil, which means the afore-

mentioned heathen, and the trading compound became as quiet as a school playground when the scarlet fever notices are up.

Yet, after all, they brought the kid on the scene, and just for that I dug up a generous dose of forgiveness. It happened thisaway. Having stirred up the hornets' nest, Whortle retired to Ibbo on the Niger, where he kept a canoe provisioned for a quick getaway and petitioned the Nigerian authorities to take a hand in quieting the country which Joulaud was working into a troublesome spirit. That brought thirty cocky Housa soldiers and young Lieutenant Ault on the job.

Ault had boy-blue eyes, quick-acting, impulsive ways, and thought the Pagan Belt and his job to round up the outlaw a joke. Generally speaking I don't cotton to the officer type. I never held a soft snap myself and it kind of riles me to see a manicured imbecile bumming through life as if this world was his especial privilege. But that boy sure tied himself around me.

He was a perennial cocktail of optimism, flavored with foolhardiness.

And that was the kind of lad they sent up for the scalp of the slickest rogue that ever laughed at law in a land where the deluge repeats itself annually, the dry season sizzles and crackles and every variety of primitive deviltry from human flesh-pots to witchcraft riot free and the blood-hunting mosquitoes regard a nice pink-fleshed white youth as succulent hunting ground. Trouble swarmed around the lad like buzzards on a dead hippo.

In the first place he starts out with a scrap with the missionary over a Montoil convert whom he used for interpreter in his palavers, until he caught the rascal interpreting his decisions in native quarrels to suit the highest bidder. Ault ordered the fellow a flogging, and then let him run off with his howl to Ibbo, whence Whortle worded the lieutenant a call-down, which was promptly returned to him with an endorsement to mind his own business. There's many a good white's reputation gone to smash on the tale of a missionary. But Ault scoffed at my warnings.

"Shucks!" he would cry, and, with a contemptuous pop of his fingers, "as if I cared t-h-a-t for the Trouble-Maker. Let's talk of Joulaud."

Oh yes, let's talk of the desperado—where he laired, how to get at him, some new plan, and all the foolish rest of it, which Joulaud laughed at from his hiding in the tumbled country behind the Montoil plains. It had become a bitter personal matter with the lad, his soldier pride was on its dander, but, Lordy, hunting Joulaud with barrack-drilled Housa was like running a wise old wolf to earth with kenneled terriers.

That was the layout, when one night about five months after the soldiers arrived, as we sat to chop under the scooping punka a Housa sergeant hustled in an albino negro, a repulsive creature with dirty yellow skin, red and kinky hair and weak pink eyes that blinked in the light of the oil lamp, at which the fellow crossed his two thumbs in "charm" against white man's "magic," and whom the sergeant introduced in his pidgin-English as "Nigger what done know where de bad massa live," which turned out to be "Place where de land go up into de sky on both sides, and if you fall down one side you go die one-time and if you fall down other side you go die one-time all-same."

I had to put that into plain English for a cañon with high precipices, to fall down which meant instant death. Further questioned elucidated the fact that the cañon was haunted by some creatures called the tailed giants.

I knew the place at once for a bottle-shaped cañon in the depths of which was a big adobe house as ancient as tribal history. The place was avoided by the Montoil as *ju-ju*, bewitched, that is. They said it was haunted by tailed giants.

Ault scoffed at the tailed giants, and grinned in my face when I ventured an opinion that if he had been in the country as long as I had he'd have a mind open to believe anything. He passed the matter up with a grin that reflected on my credulity and took up the chance of the Albinos' story of Joulaud's hiding-place being the bait of the desperado. We were discussing it, back and forth, when a mail-runner panted in and from the folds of his loin-cloth shook a long envelop bearing the seal of the high commissioner of Nigeria and a smaller letter addressed in a woman's hand.

The lad tore open the first, to rush through business and have a free mind to enjoy the other missive. But he had barely glanced at the enclosure when I saw his eyes freeze with incredulity, then pained amazement. He blurted across the table that he was ordered down river to report at headquarters for court-martial.

Court-martial! I could understand how the word whiplashed his soldier pride, even his agonized face was not expressive enough of his misery. I slipped around the table, but he shook my hand off his shoulder, at the same time savagely crumpling the letter. Being entirely in the dark and a little timid about intruding questions, I sought to distract his mind by indicating the smaller envelop. I had a pretty good idea of its contents, for every once in a long while the runner brought in similar envelopes addressed in a woman's hand.

The lad's face would shine for days after, and he'd exhibit a photo of a brunette with steady hazel-brown eyes and a teasing little oval face that could be just framed in a man's two hands. He would open up on the cub love that held the best in him true to itself. But as I picked up the letter to put it in his hand I was startled to note that it carried no old country postmark, but had evidently been handed to the mail-runner down river.



WAS it possible that Alice Ingram was in Africa? Then came the instant wonder whether her coming had anything to do with the court-martial order. The two significances were so utterly out of routine and the expected that my mind naturally connected them. All this slipped through my mind as the lad dully opened Alice Ingram's letter, only to cry out instantly:

"She's coming to the Pagan Belt. She's on her way up river!" he sobbed out, and jumped up from his seat, unable to trust himself any longer, jammed the letter in my hand to read and escaped down the veranda to his room. So it was I read what had been sacredly written for but one pair of eyes.

DEAR, DEAR ROBBIE:

I shall be with you in a day or two after you get this. I am coming up to learn the truth for myself. I will not believe you guilty of the hideous cruelties to the natives which the *Missionary Home Weekly* charges. There is some awful mistake and I am going to find out for myself. I should be with you now but have stayed over at Ibbo to find out what data he had to go on to make his awful charges —

There was more to it; clean-cut love stuff, simple and true, but the real excuse for the letter was in the first few lines.

So he was charged with cruelty to natives, and of course the Ibbo trouble-maker was the bee in the bonnet—of course. But, Lordy, cruelty charges—cruelty charges! No wonder the kid was peeved.

I went to his door. I didn't like the idea of his brooding. It was quiet in there. I softly rapped the panel. He opened the door a little ways, and directly I saw his set jaws I knew he had a grip on himself.

"It's all right, Mister Macgregor," he said, giving me the "mister" in that respectful way of his; "It's all right. I'm thinking things out."

"Don't do anything rash, Rob, lad," I cautioned. "Go slow, for the girl's sake."

"Yes, yes, yes," he gulped. "I'm all right. Just leave me alone, please."

I saw he was best left alone, and gave my attention to a few necessary preparations against the coming of Alice Ingram. I had the compound cleaned up, issued loin-cloths to the blacks, with stern orders for wearing of same, and then took the houseboys in hand in a little needful drilling before the place could be considered fit for a lady. I discovered that the sergeant still held the albino, by Ault's orders, he said, and I wondered what the lad was scheming as I turned in under the mosquito curtains, to read.

I had read about an hour when I fancied I heard stealthy steps slipping along the veranda and then a body gently drop over the rail. I called out, but receiving no answer put it down to a thieving houseboy. It takes a whole lot to entice one from under

the protection of the mosquito-netting when the skeeters are abroad.

My first thought on awakening was for Ault. I went to his room. The door was wide open, but he was not there, nor had his bed been slept in. The next that struck my eyes were his shoulder-straps, on the floor, just where they dropped after being cut from his tunic. Then I saw a penciled note on his pillow.

OLD MAN:

I am taking a whack at Joulaud. I have worked out a plan. I think he sent the albino to trap me and the Housa, and I'm going to use his trap on himself. It's a thousand-to-one shot, but if it turns out right I'll have something to my credit when I go to court-martial, and if it turns out wrong—if I don't come back, it's up to you to break it to Alice.

He added that he wouldn't say good-by as that would be "bad *ju-ju*" as the blacks say. His belt with sword and revolver hung against the wall. So he had gone forth "open palms," as we say for unarmed, trusting to God knows what. Where? Had he gone to the cañon? And why the shorn shoulder-straps—what was the significance to be read in them? I couldn't see head or tail to it; could only see that he had put it up to me to tell the girl—what?

I bawled Sergeant Issou over from the colored men's quarters. He told me his officer had come to him about midnight and ordered him to release the albino in about two minutes. He had not noticed where the lieutenant went, but presumed he had returned to the house. But the sentry at the stockade entrance reported passing him out about two minutes ahead of the albino. I went out and scrutinized the trail. Besides myself, Ault was the only man there who wore boots. So it was simple.

I tracked him along the trail that led through the Montoil plains to the mountains, about twenty yards, where the boot-prints swerved into the high grass, which showed plainly that he had waited in hiding there, no doubt till the albino came, when he had cat-footed the fellow to Joulaud's lair? But why—what was he going to do unarmed in the outlaws' camp? And why those slashed shoulder-straps? Why, why, why?

The thought of the impulsive boy in the power of the desperado was not pleasant. I had met Joulaud, once. He had the effrontery to come to the trading-station and hold me up, backed by a score of his ruffians,

for supplies. I have seen some men in my time whom I'd rather not meet again, but never have I seen such a pair of unholy eyes with the fires of hell in them and a face more cruel than Joulaud's.

One can't rough it through savagery without getting badly tainted with it, and at the best Joulaud was a Paris apache of the slums. I don't think he was quite sane; the sun had touched him, the left side of his face twitched in a way that showed he had no control over its muscles, and that meant sunstroke. Altogether his sinister appearance gave credit to the name of "*Ju-Ju Massa*" which the blacks gave him, and firmly believed he was in league with the Powers of Darkness.

And it was up to me to tell Alice Ingram that her lover was probably in the power of such a blackguard! In the meantime my hands were tied. If I took the trail after Ault there was a chance of the girl arriving whilst I was away and being fed up with lurid tales by the blacks. Again, I might blunder into a perfectly good plan Ault had laid. Then suddenly the thought came like a knife thrust, had Ault gone to *join* Joulaud? Had he in a fit of rage over the court-martial order slashed off his shoulder-straps as evidence of his resignation and then written that letter to spare the Ault name?

The possibility looked probable enough to make me wish Alice Ingram were a thousand miles away. And then it came right over me what a stink-hole the Pagan Belt is, of the things one would die to shut from a white woman's eyes, and I cursed Joulaud and I cursed Whortle, but especially I cursed the missionary. He and he alone was behind the girl's coming, I felt.



ABOUT noon the drums of the nearest Montoil village picked up a message drummed from a village on the Ibbo trail, out to which the blacks swarmed excitedly, and haunched in two rows, like people awaiting a royal procession or the coming of a circus. The news had traveled ahead that a white woman was coming. To spare her the indecent curiosity of the blacks I hurried out on the trail, and soon espied the woolly heads of her bearers bobbing on a level with the high grass like black buoys in a yellow sea.

I remembered the steady hazel-brown eyes of the photo, so knew I was not up

against any sob-son missy. That eased some, and when I came face to face with the original eyes, greeting me with a smile from her litter, I knew I was going to tell her the truth, that she would want the truth, and would meet it bravely.

She slipped a small, velvety hand into mine and leaned her weight on it in getting out of her litter, saying the whilst that I must be Mister Macgregor of whom Robbie had written so much and that she felt we did not meet as strangers. But the sting was in her last sentence.

"Why didn't Rob come out to meet me?"

That was coming right to it raw. I skirmished for time—said I'd explain when we reached the compound, but she caught on with that woman's intuitive sense to something amiss and came right at me for details. Well it was easier to tell her as we swung along, the mere physical exertion helping her to keep a grip on herself. She heard me quietly to the end, and I kept back nothing, not even the shorn shoulder-straps and the nasty inference I deducted from them. By that time we had passed through the stockade and reached the chop-room. She sank into a seat. She looked around a little wistfully, and her lips trembled as she remarked that it was a bit of a shock at finding Rob not there.

"What hurts me," she added, "is the thought that if I hadn't stopped at Ibbo to have things out with Whortle I'd have been here in time to save him from——"

She pulled up short, and we found ourselves avoiding each other's eyes. Save him from what — outlawry?

Then she seemed to dismiss sentiment, setting her jaws and squaring to business. Quite soberly we talked it over.

"Do you think, Mr. Macgregor, that Robbie has really flung in with this criminal?"

"That's a hard question, Miss Ingram," I skirmished. "It's not like the lad I know, but then he was hot-tempered and apt then to do a thing without thought."

"Yes, he was always that way. It would be the very thing for him to cut off his shoulder-straps if he were going to do something disgraceful; he would not sully his uniform. Yet I can not believe it of him."

"Nor I," I promptly agreed, and was rewarded with a warm smile.

Suddenly she jumped up from her seat with impatient exclamation.

"But why do we sit here talking? We must do something. If Robbie is in the hands of this desperado we must act quickly."

Right there the "if" in her speech was dramatically answered. An arrow came sailing over the stockade and hit the veranda. A piece of folded paper was stuck in the feather end. Even as I snatched it up I had a premonition that Joulaud had called the first trick. And so it proved. The message, written in French, sneeringly announced that the lieutenant was his "guest" and that the outlaw would be pleased if I brought along the soldiers to get him.

It was a direct challenge, which may have been bravado or may have covered sinister purpose. There was one thing that gave me pause for thought. Here was Joulaud giving his lair and inviting trouble. Then he must have a larger force than the score of riffraff armed with old flintlocks, accredited to him. But where could he recruit them? And was he planning ambush?

I put these questions to Alice Ingram, but she swept them aside with a single statement.

"What's the use? We've got to go, whichever way it is. We can't leave Rob there without at least trying a rescue."

We, always we, though God knows I had no heart for taking her through the Montoil barbarism and exposing her to the rough trail and Joulaud's deviltries.

"Oh, let's go!" she throbbed. "We must save Rob before he does some wild thing that will commit him to outlawry."

There was no use arguing there. I set about at once giving the orders for the Housa to take the trail, leaving details to their sergeant, whilst I mustered the carriers and gave out supplies.

The cañon lay about three hours' march north and we got away from the station just after the worst heat of the day, the girl riding in her litter. Owing to the narrowness of the trail and the unpleasant habit the pythons had of coiling up in the grass I could not walk by her litter, though I was anxious to talk with her and find out just what the cruelty charges were; only when the trail led through the wide hut lanes of the villages could I close up, and then I was busy warding off the grosser sights of primitive domesticity and shooing off

the Montoil, who would crowd around her litter and with indelicate curiosity probe into the "magic" of her clothes.

Curiously enough she did not thank me, but seemed if anything to invite the blacks, and was as curious about them as they about her, though, as she explained, it was the Montoil whom Ault was charged with cruelly ill-using and she wanted to get in touch with them and find out things for herself. It was on my tongue to ask point-blank for details of the cruelty charges, but at that moment I saw her face freeze into horror, and following the direction of her glance found them focused on a poor wretch whose hands had been shorn off at the wrists. She flung a couple of questions at me:

"How came that man so maimed? Is it a punishment?"

The intensity of the questions, her eager wait on my answer and her agitation showed some vital significance behind, but before I could frame an answer of those shorn hands and others that we saw among the crowd, I caught sight of the Montoil king squatting in barbarous state before his clay walls and saw that I was going to be held up for the customary call and exchange of presents. I saw at once I must hustle the girl along, or she would be forced to satisfy his curiosity in a manner repulsive to her gentle breeding.

So I grabbed a couple of striped cottons for *dash*, as we say for present, and hoped to keep his attention whilst the column and Miss Ingram moved beyond the village. But he sulked at being cheated of a call from what he called the "massa's woman," and chewed up a string of frivolous complaints. By the time I had coddled the old rogue back into good humor the column had eaten up a mile and was following a sharp turn of the trail which I knew would bring it almost to the mouth of the cañon. So the chance to inquire into the cruelty charges was lost, for when I caught up I had both hands and head full of other things.

The evil reputation of the place, combining with the weird aspect of fantastically-shaped rock and cacti distorted in sundown glow, struck terror into the superstitious bearers and the Housa, so that when I came on the scene the column had come to a dead stop and was piling up in confusion, crowding over the trail and helpless to any surprise attack. That such an attack failed

to materialize struck me as curious, and in a way suspicious, for it pointed to some possibly deep-laid plan.



I HAD but time to yell to Miss Ingram to keep back as I ran to take lead of the soldiers. I hardly knew whether she heard or not, but flinging myself before the Housa I ordered an advance on the cañon. It was my intention to close the gap and wait until the morning for developments, satisfied if I had the outlaws coked up, though I thought it mighty odd that the desperado would allow himself to be bottled up in a cañon that had but one entrance and exit.

Unfortunately my plan was upset by the impetuosity of the Housa. As we sneaked forward there was a sudden volley from some scrub in the cañon's mouth. Fortunately for us the outlaws were armed with old flintlocks, which kicked high and wild; yet unfortunately a ball cut the jugular vein of our bugler and in the firing that followed I was dependent on my voice to carry my orders and the first thing I knew the Housa had forgotten my commands to halt in the gap and were impetuously following the retreating enemy into the depths of the darkening cañon.

The retreat looked to me like a deliberate plan to entice us in, but owing to the reverberations of the rifle firing I was powerless to make my voice heard. I dashed back to Alice Ingram, to urge her return to the trading-station, but found her game and determined to see the outcome. Still I did not like it. The more I looked at it the more it seemed a deliberate trap of Joulaud's to get us in the cañon, though still I could not imagine what chance he thought he had with his score or so old flintlocks against magazine rifles.

Again it came to me as I doubled after the Housa, the girl running swiftly at my heels, was it possible that he was stronger in men than I supposed. The thought gave me creepy premonitions, but I asked myself where could he possibly recruit men, for neither threat nor bribe would ever induce a Montoil to enter that bewitched cañon and I knew he had but a score men when he came out of the Sudan. But all this was swiftly subconscious to the action of the moment. The darkness was dropping like a curtain and I had only the wasteful firing of the Housa to guide me in their tracks.

Suddenly I stumbled over a body, face down on the ground. One glance at it and I jumped to shut it from the sight of the girl, for it was dressed in military khaki, and there was but one such uniform to my knowledge in that country. In fact, as I looked I noted that the shoulder-straps were missing. But her eyes were too quick for me, as her choked cry evidenced. I bent quickly, to turn the body over and see if there was life. But instead of the features of Ault I found myself looking into the repulsive face of the albino.

There was no time to stop and wonder how the lieutenant's uniform came to be on that corpse, the urgency of keeping in touch with the Housa and balking any attempt to cut us off and the sudden new horror of the possibility of Alice Ingram falling alive into the hands of the renegade crowded out every other consideration. I was doing some quick thinking. The outlaws would either fall back to the adobe house, which would offer excellent defense, or else they would spread away before us and slip 'round to cut off our retreat from the cañon, in which case we would occupy the house.

The latter supposition proved the correct one, though again I felt a return of those creepy premonitions of prearranged plot, for why should Joulaud allow us to take up quarters behind the thick clay walls of the old house when he could so easily have barred us. The place was as strong as a fort, its courtyard alone easily accommodating the carriers, whilst a spacious, flat roof with a loop-holed coping offered splendid cover for the Housa rifles.

The very strength of the place increased the disquieting sense of being trapped, of suspense, of something impending—a feeling that Joulaud was about to turn another trick in keeping with his reputation. But my worst feelings came when I looked at Alice Ingram. I never afterward got away from the swift picture I caught of her when, after placing the Housa and barricading the entrance to the courtyard with the carriers' packs, I went into the house—one large room with walls of polished clay and a clay floor.

A black was setting out a meager supper of hardtack and tea, whilst the girl sat on a camp-stool, her tired body twisted awry, her chin sunk in her palms as her beautiful hazel-brown limpid eyes stared into what

— the mystery of that uniform on the albino, the doubt of her lover's conduct, the horrible uncertainty of not only his fate but his honor; her white, deep forehead swept clear of hair, which she had loosened and flung fluffily over her back for coolness; a strikingly alien figure in that tomb-like room whose smoky oil lamp cast far away flickering shadows that might have been the ghost-shapes of the wives and concubines that once administered there to the gross pleasures of the king of the tribe.

I can still see her eyes turning quietly to mine as I entered, her little, feminine mouth forcing a brave smile that turned awry in spite of her, so that her white teeth bit sharply through the lip, conquering the flood of emotions.

I stretched a camp-stool beside her, but for the life of me could not choke up a single word. What was there to say? Thus we sat a while. Then presently she pressed a hand to her left side, speaking chokingly.

"It hurts me—here, in my heart. He—Rob—is out there with the ruffians, and I keep asking myself why—why, why, why? What does it all mean? How came that albino to be wearing his uniform? Rob had such pride in his profession that it would seem to him desecration to put that uniform on the albino. Was he a willing party to it, or is he—" she broke off on a hard swallow, then finished—"is he dead?"

But the next instant she answered herself.

"No; I can not believe that." Then she jumped to her feet with a characteristic cry: "Oh, if only we could *do* something! We can't sit like this through all the night. I am stifed, choking. It's like a bad dream. Presently I will wake up and be happy again. Mister Macgregor, is there nothing we can do?"

What answer I might have dug up to that was forestalled by a sudden uproar in the cañon, an indescribable uproar that for the moment took the blood out of my face and introduced me to as good an imitation of downright fear as ever I'll want to feel again in this life. There are no words to get around that uproar; at first it reminded me of an infuriated mob of lynchers, and then I seemed to hear shingle rolling and shrieking under avalanching floods, far away, whilst nearer at hand the Housa on the roof uttered piercing shrieks of mortal

terror and the carriers gave vent to that awful animal-like throaty groaning of negroes in the grip of a sickening horror.

I saw Alice Ingram pale, and as I slipped a supporting arm about her I felt the tremors ripple through her slender form. But next moment she pulled herself together and I dashed out into the courtyard and took a flight of worn clay steps to the roof, the girl close behind.



THE sight that met my eyes was no sight for a girl just out of tamed and policed civilization. I made a movement to block her view, but she was swifter, slipping 'round me and running to the copice, where she had uninterrupted view of what the Pagan Belt can offer in the way of undiluted savagery. On the high escarpments of the precipices swarmed huge men-shapes brandishing smoky grass torches in the dancing light of which their hideousness stood out plain.

Actual description beggars the frightening aspect of the savage creatures, who wore fantastic masks of coconut fiber topped with rams' horns, whilst their pirouetting bodies were like so many animated painted totem poles, and—finishing barbarism—each shape swung a long tail.

The tailed giants were materialized.

In the first shock of it I could not realize that I was looking at human beings. Indeed it was hard to realize any human being pirouetting a thousand feet above death on ledges neither cat nor steeplejack would take chances on. And all the while they gave vent to appalling sounds through hollowed sticks, whilst from their hips bobbed dry-seeded gourds. It was these gourds that made that noise that at first had seemed to me like shingle shrieking under storm waves. And in our ears, right there on the roof, the Housa bel-
lowed—

"O-o-h, de tailed giants come to eat us up! O-o-h, o-o-h!"

But by this time my think-trap was going. Tailed giants or not, there were human lungs behind that shrieking and it was human deviltry behind the display. A wild animal growls before attacking to put fear into its prey, and so do savages yell war-cries to intimidate before attacking. They could teach even Kaiser Bill a thing or two about "frightfulness." I have known tribes of the Pagan Belt to keep up

a war of shrieks and threats for days before a single spear is hurled.

And then it came over me with sudden horrible realization that this was Joulaud's ace trick—that these creatures, this prancing army was behind his confidence and his luring of us into the house. Those devils were between us and the cañon's mouth—between us and—everything. We were entombed, shut off, with fear-demoralized Housa for sole defense.

"O-o-h, de tailed giants come to eat us up!" they shrieked, and there wasn't a rifle among them steady enough to hit a city hall at ten yards.

Presently the attack would come, and then. . . .

It was up to me to restore the Housas' confidence, to convince them of the flesh-and-blood materiality of the creatures, and I sure put my wits to it to run down Joulaud's new recruits. It happened that when I first adventured into the country I had wised up on tribal traditions to avoid fatal mistakes, such as paying a call on a sub-chief before paying one's respects to his overlord, or giving bigger *dash* to a chief entitled to seven umbrellas than to a lord of a dozen, umbrellas being in Negroland the insignia of rank.

So I hurriedly furbished up my local history gleanings and derived a plausible, in fact what I felt to be the true and only theory. Next it was up to me to get the idea past the superstitions of the Housa. So I made a speech on the roof, in the flowery oratory the Housa fall for, plus a Billy Sunday punch. Were they soldiers or houseboys, that they trembled before bushmen who had put on grass tails to scare them, I demanded. But with skulking eyes they cried back that they weren't afraid of men, but that these shapes were *ju-ju*, meaning that they were not of this world.

"*Ju-ju* fiddlesticks," bellows I, or similar in Housa. "Listen to your wise uncle—listen to one learned in the blacks of this country. Learn, oh, Housa, that a great great many moons gone by there lived in this cañon a tribe called the Yergums, who hunted in the mountains and were men of great stature. Now in those days the Montoil had not come into the land, but were driven down by the Arab slavers. Now the Montoil were many, the Yergums few. The many fell on the few, for the

Montoil coveted the wells and the yam and mealie patches of the Yergums.

"Oh, Housa, I have heard the Montoil minstrels sing of how their warriors found the Yergums in this bottled cañon and put them to the *assegai*. Then the Montoil settled in the cañon, the king in this very house. But in a little while there appeared these creatures called the tailed giants. They appeared on the precipices and rolled boulders down on the Montoil, and dropped down spears and shot down lighted arrows and frightened the Montoil away. The Montoil said they were *ju-ju*.

"Houseboys' tales, Housa. Listen to your wise uncle. I have given much thought to the disappearing Yergums. I have asked myself, would a wide-awake bunch of savages bottle themselves up in a cañon with but one exit? I have asked myself if there was not a way up the precipices. I said yes, and by that way many Yergums escaped the Montoil *assegaïs*. But in the mountains they were like to die of thirst and hunger. So they went to their wizard, who said, 'Get you every man a mask and ram's horn like unto mine, and get you hollowed sticks to make your voice frightful like mine, and then get you grass tails, and it will come to pass that we shall frighten away these Montoil from our wells and yam fields.' And this they did, and the Montoil were frightened away.

"Then came the Bad Massa. But him the Yergums could not frighten away with bushmen's tricks. He laughed, and said, 'I, too, am *ju-ju*. I will be your king. You shall be my warriors. I have guns. And we will put the Montoil to tribute.' And this they did. And now they appear on the precipices at the Bad Massa's command, to put fear into your hearts before they attack."

It was a fool spiel, but it got 'em going all right. Even Alice Ingram, who could not understand the words, noted the stiffening effect on the men. They began bawling to the Yergums to come down and fight, called 'em bushmen and flung filthy insults that I was mighty glad the girl couldn't understand. But the Yergums were already acting.

As if by prearranged signal, the torches were suddenly dashed out. The demoniac yelling dropped into a more ominous silence. It seemed to me I could hear them slip down the faces of the precipices and massing

in the cañon's mouth, such is the force of imagination in the grip of horror. I was thinking of the girl. But she was thinking of the lad, of her lover, and of the cruelty charges and his honor, as her next stammered words show.

"There w-will be n-no one to clear his name, if—if things go against us tonight."

There it was; not her own young life, not the robbery of the future, nor fear of cruel death, but thought only for Rob's honor. I don't understand it—don't pretend to understand it, but all I know that just then it did not seem the least bit high-flown or foolish, but just herself, her nobility. If those Yergums got us, there'd be no one to clear the lad of the charges. Speaking personally, I wouldn't give a week of real life for all that all the missionaries might care to say about me. I want to see the sun rise tomorrow and I ain't ashamed to confess it.

But right there, on that roof, with those savages massing in the bush, I wasn't banking so strong on seeing tomorrow's sun. I was thinking, sweating to know if I'd have the courage to use my revolver at the end and save her from falling alive into the hands of the desperado.

And I had led her into it, had walked into the very trap Ault had avoided. I saw the whole thing in nasty flashes; the albino sent to bait Ault to bring the Housa, and that failing, the arrow message shot over the stockade to induce me to come on the run with soldiers to rescue the lad, only to be entrapped.

I saw what Joulaud was after—the rifles, with which he could swagger through that ivory poacher's paradise around Lake Chad, gathering riches with both fists. And of course his spies would have told him of the coming of the white woman, and I could imagine the tease of that to one who had looked into ebony homeliness for many years.



ALICE INGRAM touched my arm. Her ears were cocked to something out there in the brush. And then I heard it, a sound like a flock of sheep cropping through high grass. My God! Had I wanted for interpretation of that soft rustling, that unmistakable odor that denotes the presence of Africans in numbers settled it. It lay on the stagnant air of the cañon like a poison exhalation. From

a slight shudder that trembled through the girl I knew she was on to the sinister horror of it.

The savages were right there under our noses, drawing a cordon around the house. Once one has heard the sinister rustle of that snake-like belly-crawl of attacking savages one never, never forgets it. I got one swift, horribly realistic picture of the coming *assegai* rush, which the high-powered magazine rifles were useless to stop; in my mind I saw the frenzied Yergums hurtling themselves over the courtyard wall, giant leaping from shoulder of giant, and then the hideous work—the final act when I put my gun to the temples of Alice Ingram.

I felt a sudden spasm of rage against the missionaries who had agitated against the use of the charge-stopping dum-dum bullet, and then there came over me an awful sense of helplessness. In a shipwreck one can throw a woman into a boat or tie a buoy about her, but here I could do nothing.

The Housa, too, had caught the rustling. But my speech and taunts had aroused their fighting spirit. They renewed their filthy personal insults at the tailed bushmen, and threatened to go down and "eat them up."

The urgency for action harrassed me. I felt I ought to take the fight to the enemy and not wait for him to start. I called on Sergeant Issou, who wore half a dozen medals earned in punitive expeditions. He ought to have a thing or two up his sleeve.

And it proved he had. He suggested what he called "war medicine," by which he meant the rockets a fighting force always carries with it in Africa, more for their frightening effect on superstitious savages, who call them "*ju-ju* fire." I jumped the suggestion—had the rockets brought up from the packs at once, and saw right away that in addition to their fear-inspiring value they had real merit in the light they would offer the Housa to shoot by and in the likelihood of their firing the tinder-dry brush and burning the enemy out of cover.

My happiest prognostications were splendidly confirmed. The rockets, fired direct at the bush, went ricochetting and screaming through the grass and scrub like the real devils the Yergums believed them to be, setting trails of angry fire in all directions.

The Yergums, or tailed giants, leaped from the ground like trap-sprung stage

devils, but neither to charge nor flee, but to execute the fiendish Fire Dance in and out the leaping flames. And right there the Housa let go their rifles. It was cold murder, nothing less.

Now or never the desperado would show up. Scarcely had I taken the thought when a tall figure in a French shako and burnoose dashed from a clump of mimosa over against the north precipice and ran toward the Yergums waving a cavalry saber. I grabbed the rifle of the nearest Housa. I calculated that if I dropped their white leader I'd take all the fight out of the Yergums.

But as I swung the rifle to shoulder, a second, lighter-built man in turban and burnoose dashed from the mimosa with leveled revolver, yelling something at Joulaud that was lost in the yelling of the Yergums and the roar of the flames. As he ran he brushed the turban from his head. I heard Alice Ault suppress a scream of recognition. And well enough I knew that fair head.

Before I could draw a bead on the desperado the revolver spoke and Joulaud crumpled in his tracks.

At the fall of their *ju-ju* leader the Yergums turned tail, literally and figuratively, and fled. Ault staggered along the edge of the fire toward the house. The girl flashed from my side, down to the courtyard, where I found her frantically pulling away the barricade of packs. She put out two eager hands to the lad and pulled him in, and for an instant it looked like arms around, but she seemed to remember something that pulled her up grim and quiet.

She gave a searching look into his face, but could read nothing there but a great weariness. His eyes were puffed as if they had not closed in sleep a great many hours. Then she made a movement across the courtyard toward the house. I hung back, thinking they'd have a lot to say to each other that'd be easier said without an audience, but she motioned me to accompany. She wasn't smiling.

The lad had to do some tall explaining before the smile would again work her lips. Just what cruelty charges he was up against I had no inkling, though it was evident from her desperate journey to clear his name that the missionary had been modest in blackening it. As for his presence in

the camp of the outlaws I had no doubt that he had proper excuse.

My latter conjecture proved correct. The moment we got to the camp-stools he opened up on his wild scheme. It seems that he tumbled to Joulaud's plan to ambush the soldiers, and anyway he didn't bank much on the Housa, whose superstitious dread of the cañon made cowards of them even before trouble started.

No, his plan was to go to the desperado unarmed, taking with him the court-martial letter and acting as if wild with rage, and disgusted with the authorities, and rather than face a court-martial trial on cruelty charges he would have to admit—I saw the girl start and turn deadly pale; but he went on as if the admittance were a mere nothing, saying that he meant to fool the outlaw into the belief that he had himself turned outlaw, was willing to join forces. To that end he had slashed off his shoulder-straps, an action whose significance would not be lost on Joulaud, himself an army man. But, said the lad, the desperado would not take him right off for an outlaw.

"Great Scott, Rob," I cried. "No one would."

He slipped me a smile for that, and went on with his curious story.

"Oh, I didn't expect him to tumble right away. I expected to have to win him over, and having gained his confidence, watch my chance for the accounting. But he wore his gun continually, and never could I catch his hand far enough from it to jump him. In fact, I looked into its little iron hole whilst he forced me to swap clothes with the albino, his idea being to make the latter expose himself as leading the fight against you, under the idea that you would take the figure for me and thus I'd be hopelessly committed in your eyes.

"But the albino funk'd, and in a fit of ungovernable fury, to which he was subjected, Joulaud stabbed the fellow as we retreated to the camp under the precipice.

"I never got a chance at Joulaud till he ran to head the Yergum attack, which the rockets and the teasings of the Housa had precipitated and so upset Joulaud's schedule.

"As he rose and reached for his saber I snatched his gun, and whether he knew it or not I don't know, but he probably saw the necessity of leading the Yergums whilst

their fighting spirit was up. I jumped after him for the accounting, but was tripped up by one of his ruffians. Regaining my feet I dashed after him and—and you saw the rest. Now that Joulaud will trouble Negroland no more it should count for something at my court-martial for ordering Bartholomew that flogging.”

“Bartholomew! Flogging!” cried Alice Ingram in mystification, at the same time snatching a paper from her bosom and pressing it into his hand, her breast rising and falling with more emotion than I had yet seen her show.

I think she was snatching at his mention of the flogging as the basis of the cruelty charges, that hope and love and belief in the lad were surging back.

Ault wonderingly unfolded the paper. I saw him start, then the blood flow red into his face. Then he flicked the paper to me, with a savage sneer.

“Look! Look, Mister Macgregor, what the Trouble-Maker charged against me.”

I found myself staring at an illustration cut from the *Missionary Home Weekly* and depicting a group of handless Montoil over the caption—

“Photographed by the Reverend Mark Whortle and sworn to by one, Bartholomew, a Montoil convert, as an example of the atrocious punishments meted out to the natives by Lieutenant Robert Ault.”

Now I understood the girl’s terrible interest in those hideous wrist stumps as we passed through the Montoil villages.

“Explain to her,” the lad throbbed to me.

The girl turned to me, and if I live a thousand years I’ll never forget the glad

light in her eyes, the eager expectation. Oh, that boy meant life and soul and everything else to her. And glad enough I was to tell, though it involved an ugly bit of barbarism. You see these Montoil kings have more wives than they can properly love, and once in a while a young ’un’ll kick away to some young buck that’s taken her fancy.

Leastwise it was so till a jealous monarch made it the law that any man who looked upon the royal wives as they went forth to draw water from the wells should loose his hands. So when a buck sees one of the king’s wives coming he promptly turns his back, and keeps it turned until she’s safely passed and his hands are out of danger.

Ault broke in on the explanation.

“I found no end of the poor beggars practically starving on charity, so I rounded ’em up and sent them down to the Ibbo Mission to give Whortle a chance to play real Christian. But he doesn’t know the Montoil lingo, and there’s where I suspect that Bartholomew, the interpreter, got back his beating on me by introducing the handless Montoil as samples of my work, and of course Whortle was happy to believe the worst of me and get himself in the lime-light.”

Wimmin are rum ’uns. There’s that girl as braved the hardships of the trail, smiled in the face of death and never let go so much as a whimper when that bunch of howling tailed savages raised Cain—why what does she do but flop over and bawl her head off in the folds of his dirty burnoose and pray him to forgive her for doubting him. Lordy!



Young Johnny Eistedt



by
Kingsbury Scott

WITH his shoes in his hand, Old Man Tracy slowly climbed the stairs, which creaked under his weight. He puffed and wheezed audibly as his laborious ascent progressed, feeling his way along the dark wall with one hand and gripping the railing with the other. The young people in the parlor heard him pattering in his stocking-feet, directly over their heads. Then, at last, the metallic squeak of the bed-springs came as a signal that his day was ended, and that his worries would soon be smothered by snores.

From her corner of the somewhat faded and worn settee, Mamie Tracy sighed and young Johnny Eistedt breathed a deep breath of relief.

"Geel!" he admitted. "He wouldn't roll in so quietly if he knew I was here, would he? He's got it in for me right, girlie."

Mamie Tracy's face grew grave, and her eyes, which were usually blue and dancing, reflected the sadness of her young heart.

"It's Tom Dowd," she said mirthlessly. "Dad's so set on him, and he's sore because Tom doesn't come here any more. Dowd's got him going, Johnny. He's been telling dad a lot of stuff about the way I've used him and that doesn't help any either. Poor old pop—he think's that boy's got everything packed in that red head of his."

"I'll confess, Johnny," she continued, "dad is pretty well set on my marrying Tom Dowd. He's made him foreman out on the crib, and he told me the other night after he'd been blowing me up for going to the Harmony dance with you, that he'd give Tom a half-interest in the business if I married him."

"Lord!" groaned young Johnny Eistedt. "It's a crime to ask you to pass up him for a worthless chap like me. And here I'm only a surfman with nothing ahead but a keeper's job in sight, sometime. I never did have a chance, though, and the Service seemed to be the only opening for me."

Johnny Eistedt nervously twirled his blue cap in his hands, stopping to stare reflectively at the gold letters, "U. S. L. S." over the visor.

"He's bitter against the Service, too," Mamie admitted sadly. "He's been in touch with it so long in his work, and he says nobody who can do anything else goes into the Life-Saving Service and nobody who amounts to anything stays in it."

"Maybe he's right, girlie, maybe he's right," mused the youth. "But it's been a home to me, and there's some good friends in it. It's given me the chance I'd never had before. It pulled me out of the alleys, where I stood a chance of going to the bad, and it's put decent thoughts in my head like I never had before."

"Sometimes they just bubble up in me, these thoughts," he continued. "Why, the other night when I was on patrol, I got to dreaming about you. I could see a pretty little station on an island, and it had a garden and a green lawn like some of the resort stations across the lake. That's just what I'm planning on for you, little one, when I get my keeper's berth."

"We'll be way off on an island, maybe, with the great, big, green lake to sing to you and the steamers to blow their whistles to you when you wave at the skippers from your garden. We'll have cozy quarters and the best crew in the Service behind us."

That's my dream for you and it's the biggest thing that could happen to me.

"But I guess Dowd could give you more than that right here in this big town, where all your friends are and where there's more doing to amuse you—and then, you'd still have your folks with you, too. So, if you want to change your mind, little girl—why, I'd rather see you happy than anything else in the world."

Tucking his cap under his arm, Johnny Eistedt slipped silently out into the darkened hall, a thousand twitches pulling at his young heart. As he groped for the knob of the front door, he felt a gentle touch upon his arm and a dainty breeze of perfumed air rose up to him. His head swam with the intoxication of it and he stretched out his big arm.

"Oh, Johnny—I'd love it—there on your island!" whispered a voice which came in little gasps. "Won't you take me? Take me now, just as we planned?"

"I don't go on duty until six tomorrow night," he whispered. "If you haven't changed your mind, I'll come out here for you in the morning and then, God bless you—little girl!"



THE hall clock in Old Man Tracy's house clicked off the minutes with no sound to smother its measured count until Mrs. Tracy's old rocking-chair scraped the kitchen floor.

Then young Johnny Eistedt strode softly out into the night, treading on the air in his joy, and leaving Mamie wide-eyed and frightened a little, to watch his great form swinging down the street into the darkness. When she could see him no longer, she fled up the stairs to her room to fling herself upon her bed and bury her face in the white pillows.

She heard her mother climb the stairs slowly and go into her own room. She wanted to rush to her and tell her all, but she dared not break the spell which held her young heart.

When the house was still, Mamie Tracy crept to her window, and kneeling on the floor with her face pressed against the glass, she peered wistfully out into the night. Down over the bluff at the rear of her father's house, glistened Lake Michigan, with stars glinting on its cold surface. Along the curving shoreline as far as she could see glimmered the lights of the city, with the

taller buildings outlined in electricity against the night.

To the northward shone the high lights and the motley colored illuminations of the shipping in the harbor. At intervals she caught the red and green glints of the inbound steamers, and over where the great revolving beacon flashed monotonously, first high, then dim, was the life-saving station, and Mamie Tracy fell to hoping that Johnny Eistedt was in the lookout dreaming about her.

Suddenly the girl's wistful eyes caught the stationary red lights, which flashed at her mockingly. She knew it was the Three-mile crib, unfinished and rugged, upon which her father's life was centering just then. She thought kindly of Old Man Tracy, lying there in the room next to her own, tired out with worry and exhaustion from his day far out where now the red lights glowed.

Confident with his years in building cribs, the old contractor had met his trouble when he had taken up the construction of this great work. All over the Great Lakes he had worked, side by side with the United States Government, with never a set-back to worry him. Every Government engineer knew him and trusted him.

But he had seen the old heads in the department replaced by younger men of a different school. The new engineers pressed him cruelly and the new inspectors, who did not understand him with the fraternal spirit of men brought up in the same school of experience, made demands upon him which were impossible to meet. His old head had grown whiter since he had sunk the first foundation for the Three-mile crib. One difficulty after another had piled upon him, until all the fates seemed conspiring against him.

To protect the harbor entrance from the sweep of northeasterly gales, the Government was building the new breakwater. The great timber framework or crib, filled with rock, had been securely anchored, by the divers, by its own weight, to the lake bottom, down fifty feet or more. The superstructure above the waterline was now being rushed feverishly by Old Man Tracy and his crew. Exposed as it was to the full force of the seas, there was little chance for steady work on the job, once the Fall gales began.

Now they were threatening to do what

had never been done to him before. He had failed to complete the big job on time and they threatened to turn it over to another contractor. In one sweep a huge portion of the small wealth he had braved weather and discomfort to gain would be lost, together with the reputation he had carried a lifetime. Meager extensions of time had been granted him, but he had been handed the ultimatum. Now he was putting every atom of his energy and every ounce of his life into the crowning task.

"Poor old dad," sighed Mamie Tracy. "He's been unreasonable, but I hate to make him suffer. He's been irritable and cross, but he's had reason to be, perhaps, with all this trouble on his mind. He'll feel better toward Johnny, when it's all over, and when he knows him, but it's going to hurt him awfully at first."

In her musing her mind turned toward Dowd, and her heart grew tender toward the red-haired foreman, who was fighting desperately out there on the crib to save Old Man Tracy from disgrace and loss. She realized then why her father took him to his heart.

"Poor old daddy, dear, I've tried to be a good daughter to you," she sighed.



WHEN the cold rain drives down in late November and the east wind comes in little, whistling gusts, old sailors along the west shore of Lake Michigan shake their heads and take the warning. The masters of the liners, at their wharves, scan their weather-glasses and scowl at the gray sky before they mount their bridges to pull the signals which may cost them their ships. Tugmen push their little craft nearer the harbor mouth for quicker action if they are needed, but the skippers of the sailing craft make taut the lines which hold their vessels to the moorings, and go ashore.

When Old Man Tracy rose from his troubled bed, that late November morning, his face was drawn and gray. In the little kitchen he sat alone at the table and gulped the hot coffee, which his wife placed before him, but he refused to eat. When he had finished, he silently reached for his hat and coat, hanging from the peg on the kitchen door. The rain, beating in from the lake sapped whatever cheer was left in the world for him.

"You're not going out to that crib today,

pa?" questioned Mrs. Tracy, her troubled face turned appealingly toward him. "It's going to storm bad. I've felt it in my bones for days, and you hadn't ought to expose yourself so. You ain't young any more, pa."

"I've got to be there, ma," he said, in a voice which had lost its old-time ring. "There's only a few more days left of that extension of time they finally gave me, and we've got to finish the job. Dowd's got a big gang on for today and if we don't get washed off, we'll finish the decking before the time expires. I know I ain't young, ma, without you telling me. I've been getting old fast for the last two weeks—but I don't know as I care much what happens to me."

Mrs. Tracy anxiously studied her husband's face.

"Pa!" she said, with pleading in her voice, "why don't you give in? It ain't only the Three-mile crib that's wearing on you. It's Mamie. Why don't you let me send for the girl? She's breaking her heart—I know she is, pa. She'll never admit it. She's like yourself. She'll stick it out until you send for her to come to you."

"Then she'll never come!" he declared in anger. "Don't mention her name to me, ma! I want to forget her. She's made her bed and now she can lie in it."

"She didn't do right, pa—I know that," persisted the white-haired woman. "No girl can be happy if she runs off, like she did, without letting us know, and Mamie's found that out before now. But you and I don't want to see our little girl unhappy, pa."

"Nobody's to blame but herself," stormed Old Man Tracy. "I warned her time enough to save her from making a fool of herself. Nobody but a loafer like Eistedt would ever have tempted her to do what she did. He's got her and he'll have to keep her."

"But she loved you, pa," pleaded the woman. "She was always your chum—ever since she was a wee bit of a girl. It breaks her heart to think you would turn against her, even if she did do wrong. Remember, she's so young and she's still your little girl, pa."

"No, she ain't!" blurted Tracy. "I told her after she'd run off and got married to that fellow that no daughter of mine could do that—and I mean it. I ain't likely to

change my mind in two weeks, ma, and you know it. There's no use arguing about it. I wouldn't see her in real want, but she can't come back here as long as she sticks to that hound. She can go on living in that hole down at the station from now till the crack of doom."

"But he's going to get a station of his own in the Spring, maybe, pa, and then he'll take her away from here. I can't bear to think of her going away alone, without a home to come back to if she gets sick or lonesome."

"Rot!" exploded Old Man Tracy. "He'll never get a station, I tell you! He hasn't got the stuff in him, even for that. I'll have nothing to do with her, nor him, either. That's the end of it."

He reached impatiently for his hat and coat, but before he left he turned back to his wife, tenderly:

"I'll be late tonight, ma," he said softly. "Don't worry about me. We'll work as long as there's light."

When the door closed behind him, Mrs. Tracy sank down in her old rocker and buried her face in her withered, toil-scarred old hands. With her eyes reddened from weeping, she went about her work that morning, sorrowing for the cheery voice of her little girl, who had been her companion and the greatest patch of sunshine in her life.

It was noon when the front door clicked and Mrs. Tracy heard a familiar little patter along the hall. Then the kitchen door opened and Mamie, white and trembling, rushed into her arms.

"Dearie, dearie!" cried Mrs. Tracy, as the girl sobbed violently on her shoulder.

"What is it, child?" coaxed the mother-love.

"Oh, ma!" sobbed the girl. "It's awful. They've been signaling for help from the crib for over an hour, and even the big *Clarion* can't get out there to them. The seas are going clear over the crib and they say that every man on it 'll be washed overboard from it, if something isn't done. The tender was in getting supplies when the sea got bad, and she couldn't get back to them. The *Clarion's* tried twice and can't get near the crib. Oh, ma, ma! I couldn't stay down there alone!"

Mrs. Tracy's reddened eyes were raised appealingly to heaven and her pale lips moved.

"Pray God not to fail us, child," she whispered. "Pray Him to open a way. He has never failed me and He can't fail us now, child!"

"The crew's gone out, ma," said the girl. "Captain Nelson said it was a hopeless fight but he was going to make it if he lost every man in the boat. And Johnny's in that boat out there, ma! Oh, I can't give him up! You didn't like him—you and pa—but, oh, ma! He's everything to me! He's so kind and good to me—I love him so, ma! You'll pray for him, too, ma, won't you?"

"There, there, child," comforted the mother, ready to share her daughter's anguish in her own hour of agony. "I know you do, dearie, and I'm praying God that he'll be brought back safe to you."

Through the dark hours of the mid-afternoon the white-haired woman and the blue-eyed girl knelt by the window in Mamie's little room, which for two weeks had been like a tomb to the heart-sore mother. Their faces were pressed against the panes as they peered out over the storm-swept lake, which seemed to mock them in its confidence of victory. Far out on the misty horizon, they saw the seas whirling like a white shroud over the Three-mile crib. Now and then they caught a glimpse of the white lifeboat as it rose high on the crest of a comber, to sink out of sight a moment later in a watery valley.

"God will not fail us. He will not desert us in our hour of need," whispered Mrs. Tracy.



ALONG the beach and on the harbor revetment men were forgetting the sleet, which was driving in from the lake, as they watched the hopeless battle in the lifeboat. Suddenly horror transfixed them and a groan of agony went up. Before their eyes, a monster comber caught the white craft and whirled it over in a twinkling. Stricken dumb, the watchers saw the white bottom as the seas swept it in toward the beach. Telephones jingled and men in the newspaper offices began writing the story of the city's worst marine tragedy.

Captain Morton of the *Clarion*, through his glasses, saw the great white boat slowly right itself; saw its drenched crew clamber back to their places and watched it coming racing in on the seas toward the beach,

guided by sea-anchors, hurriedly thrown out astern.

"That's the end of it," he declared to those near him. "They're lucky to save themselves, and they won't try it again. It's all off with poor old Tracy and his gang. It's getting dark and colder and they can't hang on out there much longer. The poor boys'll be letting go now and we'll pick 'em up along the beach in the morning.

"Stand by, boys! We'll run out and try to pick up the lifeboat. That's the least we can do and it'll save Nelson and his crew from going on the beach a mile or two south of here."

For once that day, luck had a fling. A mile off the harbor the big *Clarion*, rolling down to decks in the seas, managed to get a line aboard of the lifeboat. The weary, half-frozen life-savers crouched in their seats like soldiers of a beaten army, and Keeper Nelson lay motionless in the stern. Volunteers helped moor the boat at the station slide and the cork-jacketed men crawled stiffly ashore.

"The keeper's laid out," explained a shivering surfman to the crowd as Captain Nelson was carried into the station house. "The boat caught him on the leg when she went over. It's a break, I guess."

From his pile of blankets inside the station-house, the keeper gazed sorrowfully at his solemn crew, and he guessed their thoughts.

"It's tough to fall down on that job, ain't it, boys," he comforted. "Gad! It's awful to leave those poor devils out there to die in the cold."

"If there was a chance, I'd as soon tackle it again," asserted No. 7.

"I'll leave it to you boys," announced the keeper. "You can go back out if you want to. I'm not ordering it. You've done all the Service expects now, but if you think there's a chance, take the boat. Eistedt'll have to take the sweep. I'm done for. If Eistedt don't want to go, let No. 2 handle her. Do as you please about going, boys."

There in the station-house, with his blue eyes fixed earnestly on the face of his keeper, Johnny Eistedt unfolded his plan, the plan which had suddenly raced through his young brain like an inspiration. There was no thought in his mind as to the individuality of the men near death. Sentiment had no place in the cunning twists of his thoughts. In fact the big scheme unfolded like a cold-

blooded machine, which would bring an achievement for the good of the Service. There was never a thought of himself nor those who had grown dear to him. He saw clearly nothing but a cold, bare working-plan in which no thought of individual heroism crept.

"It's a dandy!" declared Captain Nelson. "But it's an awful chance. Try it, if you want to risk yourself like that, Eistedt. The *Clarion* will tow you out."

Into the teeth of the gale, the *Clarion* battered her way with the lifeboat foaming astern in a boiling sea. Far out into the lake she plunged, past the Three-mile crib, where forty men were clinging desperately to the unfinished decking, drenched with the icy spray and weakening in their grasp on life. Well out to the windward of the crib the oars of the life-savers caught the water and the tug saw the signal to let go. As the *Clarion* turned about in a wide detour to save herself a wracking, the lifeboat worked down upon the foam-swept crib.

Eistedt detailed No. 2 of the crew to take the sweep and he, himself, stood in the stern with a new, light line made fast about his waist. Carefully measuring the distance between the rushing boat and the great wet pile of concrete, Johnny Eistedt shouted a word of farewell to his mates and leaped overboard into the combers. Immediately the man to whom Eistedt had intrusted his life began rapidly paying out the yards of new line. Away toward the beach swept the lifeboat while Eistedt struck out boldly for the crib.

"Give me all the slack you can!" came his parting warning.

Waves, mountain high, hurled him from their heights down into deep, greenish valleys which threatened to engulf him. He struggled to keep his head above water, but in spite of his strength he was rolled over and over, time after time, and his lungs ached with the pressure of the seas bursting over him. Suddenly he grew sick with horror. He saw the crib but a few feet ahead of him as a monster comber lifted him high and threatened to dash out his brains against the concrete wall.

He felt in a numb sort of way that he had lost the fight. His plan had failed. He had planned to ride the seas past the end of the crib and then to work back to it under the lee of the seawall, depending on his young strength to climb to the deck.

Instead, he was being hurled to meet it squarely with the speed of an express train. The utmost power of his resistance was like the struggle of a dry leaf in an Autumn gale.

Suddenly out of the greenish darkness he seemed to see the smiling face of the girl who had given up all she held dear for him.

"Good-by, little one," he whispered. "It's all off! It's all off, kiddie!"

With the mighty rush of water came a terrible twisting, grinding pain, then a fleeting moment of numbness. His fingers clutched something in a last desperate grasp. Tons of clear blue-green water roared over him and left him prone and gasping, with his hands gripped in the decking of the crib. In a dim, dazed way he realized that the seas had hurled him almost over the crib instead of crushing him against the stone side. Instantly he scrambled unsteadily to his feet and waved his arms toward the shore. Faintly above the roar of the breakers, he heard the short triumphant blasts of the *Clarion's* whistle.

From that point the great plan was only a matter of execution and all Johnny Eistedt asked was strength enough to do his part. Rolling in the sea a short distance from the crib lay the *Clarion*, and the thin, new line was the connecting link of life between the Three-mile crib and the tug. With the help of several of the least overcome of the marooned men, Johnny Eistedt rigged a jury mast of decking planks.

Then he hauled in on the light line and the heavy hawser of the beach rig came squirming through the water like a snake from the tug. Making it fast to his jury-spar, he waved the signal, and a wan smile of triumph played about his bruised face as he saw the life-savers in their yellow

slickers working like mad on board the tug.

Forty-one times, the breeches-buoy carried its drooping passenger from the sea-drenched crib to the rolling tug, and when night fell, the cold, bleak seas dashed in roaring fury of defeat over the deserted Three-mile crib.



LATE that night Old Man Tracy awoke in his own bed from his sleep of exhaustion. His wife sat huddled beside him in her all-night vigil.

"Mamie here, ma?" he asked.

"Yes, pa," she whispered. "I put her to bed in her own room. The poor child was so done up with worry, I couldn't make her go back to the station tonight."

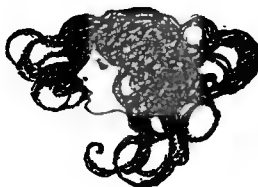
"What's she going back there for? This is her home, ma. Home's where she belongs!"

"But she'll want to see Johnny, pa."

"Send for him, ma! Right away—tonight! Get him up here! He ought to be here now, with his wife!"

"He couldn't, pa. The boys went out to the station to see him, and they had him in bed. He's pretty badly used up. But he'll come, pa, when he can. And, oh, pa, Captain Nelson sent word to Mamie that the superintendent has recommended Johnny for immediate promotion. He'll get a gold medal from Congress for this, too, the keeper says. The papers all had extras out, pa, and they call Johnny a hero and some of them printed his picture. He'll be a keeper in a few days."

"No, he won't!" snapped Old Man Tracy, rising up on his elbow. "I got a place for him—here at home. I won't have a boy of mine in a confounded Service that makes a man miss death as close as he did, before it'll recognize him."



Disarmament

by
William Carlton
Davis



Author of "Ten Million Ems of Nonpareil"

CHUTE GULCH sounded all right, but the spelling might have been altered to "Shoot" without offending those who are guided more or less by things as they actually exist. Shootings were so frequent in the border town as to reach the dignity of a continuous performance. In Chute Gulch "a man for breakfast every morning" came so near to being a description of the actual conditions that the phrase was robbed of any facetiousness that the coiner might have felt when he first uttered the words. It was an active place, and the action started mostly from the hip.

Located on the border-line between near-civilization and barbarism, Chute Gulch, gathering-place for the miners and prospectors coming down from the mountain that towered behind it, and for the cattlemen and cowboys from the plains that stretched out in front to the horizon-line, had a very elastic moral code.

The gulch was the clearing-house for all the pent-up deviltry that accumulates in human beings forced into paths of rectitude by environments growing out of and exacted in the struggle for existence. The miner, toiling in the wholesome bowels of mother earth; the plainsman rounding up his herds in the open country, kept their hearts and minds unsoiled, through force of circumstances. Both worked to the same purpose—looking forward with growing desire to break the monotony, and a stake to break it with.

Chute Gulch furnished the opportunity

in all its glittering variety. As an obliterater of monotony, Chute Gulch left no room for complaint—furnished no occasion for apology. Chute Gulch was, in Western parlance, "the goods." And that is why Cold Springs, only a matter of a few miles further along the range and a few feet nearer hell, was never a serious contender for the popularity that Chute Gulch maintained to the end.

True, Cold Springs had better water, but, as Doc Benton, very sagely, not to say aptly, remarked—

"Who the — wants to drink water; that's for cattle."

The secret of the Gulch's continued success as a center for the coming together—and the prying apart—of the gentlemen impregnated with a desire to shatter Old Man Monotony was Joe Ruiz. Joseph was of Mexican descent, but he had a white mother of some intellectual attainments, and was reared in the United States. Added to his native shrewdness was a vast knowledge of men and things and the world in general, due to omniverous reading of everything he could get hold of, from the *Police Gazette* to the Bible, which may properly be considered the two extremes of literature.

He knew the record of every fighter, wrestler or ball-player of note, every horse worthy a bet. He could quote from Shakespeare or Scripture, and blaspheme or pray with equal facility. Disputes—sporting or business—were settled on his say-so. His word was all the security anybody asked. He was soft-spoken and mild

mannered most of the time, and never carried a weapon of any kind. He believed in the biblical injunction that "Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword," and he had been heard to declare that it included six-shooters. He was not quarrelsome; but he spoke his mind when he deemed the occasion ripe, and was never known to give an inch when he believed he was right.

Chute Gulch was on the wane as a border attraction when Joe Ruiz arrived there in search of a place where he might cast his lot. After one day in the town he gave voice to his thoughts and his criticisms with the directness for which he was noted:

"This town needs fixing. You expect the boys to come here and spend their money. All right. Well, your whisky—the kind you serve over the bar—would cut the bark off a tree. The girls in the dance-halls here are candidates for the old ladies' home."

And this, from a perfect stranger, five-feet-four, to "Big Ed" Lavin, in his own place of business—Ed's Place! And Ed hadn't shot a man for over three weeks!

Big Ed just looked down at the little, bright-eyed, black-haired man with a curious expression on his face. Then he gazed about inquiringly at those near by, as though to ask whether they had also heard. They were all looking at Ruiz, wondering which way he would fall when the slug from Ed's .45 plowed through him.

But Ruiz kept right on talking, as though Lavin had voiced some objection which called for an answer.

"All right; answer me this question: do you think this is good whisky?"

"You're pretty fresh, young feller," snapped Lavin.

"Maybe I am, but you haven't answered the question."

"Which I don't have to."

"Right; answer enough," was the quick retort.

Lavin flushed and his hand went instinctively to his gun. But he saw no sign of a weapon on Ruiz, and his hand stopped. Besides, his curiosity was aroused. Ruiz satisfied it rapidly.

"I'm a stranger to you, but I'm telling you right," he went on, "and you know it. I've been here less than twenty-four hours, and I see that the town is going on the bum. You want to know why? Well, it's be-

cause the boys ain't getting what they pay for. I've been through this game from soup to nuts. You've got to give people what they want; *not* what you want them to have. I'm giving you straight dope. I spent a couple of days at Cold Springs. A little wild and woolly, but well located.

"Some wise guy will come in there some day, dish up the right kind of stuff, and run the Gulch off the map, if you fellows in this town don't come out of your trance. Take a tip from me. Put in a stock of liquor that is at least a grade or two above embalming fluid. Can that flock of hay-shovelers in the dance-hall and import some girls with style. And see that they behave up to quitting time. After that, it is none of your business."

"You've got your nerve," scowled Ed.

"No; you're mistaken," replied Ruiz. "Nobody needs nerve to tell the truth."

"Which you shore told it a whole lot," broke in Nobe Jellerson, nodding affirmation.



BIG ED was doing some quick thinking. He was a man of quick action in a country where quick action was necessary and desirable. He grabbed Ruiz by the hand, and turning to the crowd, exclaimed:

"Gents, permit me to interdoose the new manager of this yere joint." And then to Ruiz: "Does it go, Mr. —?"

"You're on. Ruiz is my name—Joe Ruiz."

"Lavin is my name—Big Ed, they call me. When can you go to work?"

"I've been working ten minutes." He looked Lavin in the eye without a tremor.

"Ain't he the chain-lightnin'?" ejaculated "Red Peters," admiringly.

"The drinks are on the house," shouted Big Ed.

The boys edged up to the bar, the black bottle skidded haltingly down the line and the glasses were filled. A toast was proposed to the new manager, and arms with red liquor at the ends of them were held aloft. Elbows crooked and mouths were agape for the draft.

"Hold on."

They turned to Ruiz.

"Who's treating here?" he asked, looking at Lavin.

"The house," replied Ed.

"Meaning you?"

"Meaning me," with a frown.

"Ain't you forgot something?"

Ed looked bewildered.

"Whut?" he asked, finally, as though giving up a riddle.

"You haven't decorated the mahogany. Bad example."

To the credit of Big Ed, with all his dominant spirit, he had the saving sense of humor. For a second or two he glared at Ruiz. Then he looked around at the boys, who were smiling, broke into a loud guffaw and laid a gold piece on the bar. Then he slapped Ruiz on the back in friendly token of his commendation.

"I shorely does cotton to a man that's on to his job at all times," said Lavin.

The glasses went aloft again and elbows were beginning to crook for the unfinished toast, when Ruiz handed them another diversion. The barkeeper was just about to down a full-sized swig, when Ruiz, leaning across the bar, put a restraining hand on his arm.

"You're not in this," he said, in even tones.

The barkeeper uttered an oath and appealed mutely to Lavin.

"Which the same is the new rules, and they stands regardless," said Lavin, with a peal of laughter in which all joined riotously.

A third time the elbows bent, when Lavin turned to Ruiz.

"Where's yours?" he asked.

"I'm an employee; and no employee of this house drinks while on duty. That goes all along the line."

And it went. Ruiz conducted the immoralities of Ed's Place on a high plane. Ed gave him full swing, and there was no appeal from his decisions. Ruiz introduced business methods compatible with the conditions, and Lavin's business prospered.

Such was the introduction of Joe Ruiz to Chute Gulch. He had shown that he had nerve, and he soon showed that he had judgment, and the two attributes in no long time established him as a man of capacity. He became the mentor of the social underworld of the Gulch. He enjoyed the same position there that he had occupied in the big city that he had left when the reform movement overwhelmed and "dry-cleaned" it.

There he had kept within the confines of his own little kingdom and never invaded

the up-town preserves of bigger business. At the Gulch his sovereignty was proportionately broadened; there was no up-town. It was all down-town.

At Chute Gulch cattle trades were made in the back room of the saloon; wages were paid over any convenient card-table; mining deals were consummated in front of the nearest bar, accompanied by a chorus of—

"Here's hoping."

The barroom was the clearing-house for business activities and social amenities. It was the public forum, where the most convincing arguments were those under the trigger-finger. It was the theater of life—and death.

As the new order of things at Ed's Place became manifest in the prosperity and increased popularity of that worthy's establishment, it very naturally followed that other saloon men of the Gulch tried to follow the pace set by the new management.

But the imitation is never so good as the genuine—it is always the imitation. And, besides, the others lacked what Big Ed paid Ruiz for—savvy.

"You're a wonder, Joe," announced Lavin when he witnessed the fruitless attempts of his business rivals to get back their fading trade.

"No; you're mistaken, Ed," was his modest reply; "I've just got common sense. The way to beat the other fellow is to be just a little better than he is—all the time. Not occasionally, but—all—the—time. Continuous performance—that's the stuff. Just give the boys what they want, and keep on giving it."

"Which I says amen, fervent," exclaimed Ed, pressing another bag of gold-dust as flat as possible, so that he could get the safe door shut.



CHUTE GULCH kept on the even tenor of its lawless way, writing indelibly on the scroll of time its reputation for rough hospitality, good whisky and funerals. Its contributions to the census reports were conspicuously few; the vital statistics were mostly on the other side of the ledger, and steadily growing.

The increasing mortality rate was a matter of grave concern to Ruiz, who regarded it as boding no good for the future of the town. But he said nothing. It was really none of his business, he reasoned, that any man should choose to express his contempt

for another's reputation for quickness on the draw, and thereby suffer the consequences of getting proof that survived him.

The six-gun was an old and honored Western institution that Joe did not care to interfere with if he could avoid it. He considered it a lack of reasoning capacity and a confession of such, that men chose to settle arguments with .45s. He felt that he was doing fairly well if he kept the mirrors, lights and other furnishings of Ed's place intact. That accomplished, he was doing his full duty.

And so he merely frowned whenever a citizen of Chute Gulch or an unwary visitor was snuffed out by methods which bespoke inconsiderate haste on the one side and a lack of preparedness on the other.

But the frown showed so often on his brow that it threatened to become a chronic condition. The precincts of his place of employment—the apple of his eye—were being invaded by sudden death, which brought forth his protest. Ed's best barkeeper got in the way of a slug intended for somebody else. Good barkeepers were hard to get. One night, in a playful mood, Bill Hicks had cut loose with his .45 at the fiddler in the dance-hall by way of objection to the tempo.

After another fiddler had been rustled up, it was found that the piece of lead had plowed a hole in the violin, thereby rendering its value as a musical instrument wholly negative. It took three weeks to import another instrument, during which time business fell off twenty per cent. The only barber in town got into a row with "Hoodoo" Kennedy over a Spanish woman, with the result that always follows the attempt of a razor to go up against a six-shooter.

Conditions steadily grew worse. A week without the slaughter of some more or less useful citizen was infrequent. If a week was missed two went over the divide the following week, so that the average was maintained. Then it became two a week, and one every other day was but a short jump up the mortality ladder. There were no actual murders. The killings were all the result of quarrels, and the defunct party was the more often blameworthy, or at any rate indiscreet.

The frown upon the face of Joseph became a steady glower. His disposition, naturally sunny, became morose. He was confronted by a condition with which he

had had no great experience. In the big city that he had known before, men fought their fights with nature's weapons. A well-placed smash in the nose or a swing to the jaw was the popular form of physical argument. It usually sufficed. The participants shook hands afterward and pledged their eternal friendship in the flowing bowl. And this, Ruiz thought, was fair enough.

But there could be no such determination of a quarrel at the Gulch; for one can't shake hands with a corpse to the advantage of either the quick or the dead.



THE absence of Joe's sunny smile worried Lavin. He was greatly concerned lest his manager was going into a decline.

"I'd admire to know whatever's eatin' you, Kid," he said one day. "You certainly ain't looked pleased none, fer some considerable time. Ain't the ante high enough? If it ain't, why—" drawing out a sack of dust.

"It ain't that, Ed. It's these killings. Too many. A shoot is all right now and then. Every growing town ought to have a sudden death once in a while to keep up the interest. But it's overdone here. It ought to be stopped. Take it from me, it'll put the town on the bum right."

"Which you're shore shoutin' out loud," fervently exclaimed Big Ed. "I p'intedly agrees with your form of reasonin', But how you-all a-goin' to redoose the death rate?"

"I've been thinking it over, Ed, and it seems to me that it would be a good scheme to get 'em together and reason with 'em. You back me up. Pass the word around among the gunmen that there is to be a meeting to talk over an important proposition. I'll give 'em a talk. You know 'em all. Just slip 'em the word quietly to attend a meeting. It's no use to talk to these boys separately; got to get 'em together and get some concerted action. If we could get 'em to agree to give up their gats——"

"Shed their hardware?" interrupted Ed, aghast at the very audacity of the suggestion.

"Sure. Why not?"

Ed stood with his mouth open and his eyes staring. He glanced furtively at his own trusty weapon with the notched handle. Nervously he fingered it. Then his eyes shifted to Joe's face.

"Y-you m-mean quit t-totin' their weep-pons?" he stammered.

"You got me."

"Why, Kid, why——"

"Now, hold on, Ed. Listen. I've been delivering the goods here, haven't I? I haven't fallen down once, have I? This can be put across if you'll stand by me. Are you with me?"

There was appeal in Joe's voice, and a compelling wistfulness in his eyes.

Big Ed hesitated, his gaze alternating between his gun and his manager's face. His indecision was over in a few seconds, and he gripped Joe's hands.

"Kid, I've said frequent, that fer nerve, you-all has airy other man in this here universe throwed and hog-tied. Which I ain't hankerin' none to go into this yere game o' yourn, I'm here to say speshul that I ain't never went back on a friend when he needed help. I plays yer game, kid, cl'ar across the board, till the lights is shot out. And that's whatever."

"Then we win, Ed," said Ruiz, as they grasped each other's hands hard and the light of determination burned in their eyes.

"Make the meeting Friday night in the dance-hall at eight. The boys will all be broke and sober by then," continued Ruiz. "Just tell 'em it's important and that I'll give 'em a talk."



IN THE dance-hall Friday night foregathered the ready-fingered men of Chute Gulch—men with reputations for speed in the matter of dispatching bullets straight and certain; who shot first and talked afterward. The yellow glare of the oil lamps suspended from the rafters indifferently penetrated the smoke-fog that circled up to the roof.

An air of suppressed excitement, tinged with curiosity and mysteriousness, pervaded the room.

"Whut in —— is this meetin' fer, anyhow?" asked "Texas" George.

"Boys," volunteered Doc Benton, by way of answer, "I'm as ignorant as you-all concernin' the reason for this yere gatherin'; and I gives it out cold that you gents will have to seek enlightenment elsewhere."

Ruiz entered. He looked about, sizing up the crowd. A glance seemed to convince him that the six-shooter élite of the town was on hand—a small but extremely select gathering. Walking through the

crowd, with a nod here and a word of greeting there, he reached the raised platform erected for the orchestra.

Ruiz raised his hand for silence. It was promptly accorded him. They all knew that he didn't talk unless he had something to say. In his hasty glance about, Joe noted that Big Ed was close to the platform, wearing a look of concern. He was aware that Ed had no concern for his own safety. Lavin was a man who accepted whatever situation presented itself as just a part of life—part of the game to be played as best he could play it, with no thought of the personal hazard to himself.

Big Ed was concerned for his manager and his friend. The glance that each gave the other spoke volumes. Each recognized in the other a dependable unit in the game they were engaged in, among gamblers who would cash in their lives with as little hesitation as they would a stack of white chips. Then Ruiz spoke.

"There's too —— many killings in this community—senseless killings."

He paused a moment to give his words a chance to get under the bronzed skins.

A few faces flushed; some eyes narrowed. There were a few sinister smiles. Two or three looked about at their neighbors. Nobody uttered a word. The hush was ominous. Ruiz went on:

"I'm going to tell you fellows something, and I'm going to tell it to you straight. These killings have got to stop. Don't misunderstand me. Get me right. If a man tries to hornswoggle your property, camp on his trail until you get the right amount of cold lead into him. There are some insults that only a six-gun can wipe out, as we all know. But you don't have to pull your gats and cut loose every time your trigger-finger itches or somebody looks cross-eyed at you. Use a little discrimination.

"There was no use killing the barber the other night; a punch on the nose would have been enough. One of you fellows, in a burst of merriment, unlimbered at Ed's Place the other night, and as a consequence the only fiddler in town who could carry a tune in a sack is now twanging a harp. Another one of you tried out the acoustics of the place with his .45, and we're minus a barkeeper. Doc Clark gets soused and pulls his little pearl-handled .22, and the next thing recorded some misguided owner

of a Colt's puts a hole in him big enough to throw a dog through.

"It wasn't necessary. The whole seven shots from his toy artillery wouldn't be any worse than a bee-sting. Clark wasn't much of a doctor, but he could set a broken bone, drunk or sober. In the last month we've lost a number of more or less useful, not to say ornamental, citizens. The point I want to get into your heads is that most of your wrangles can be settled without bloodshed. A good crack on the jaw don't hurt anybody, and when the fellow comes out of his trance he is still useful.

"Take, for instance, the half-breed I walloped on the jaw the other night when he got fresh. When he came-to, at the end of a couple of hours, he was still the best rope artist in this camp. We haven't won a foot race here since 'Slivers' Jones got in the way of a playful pistol shot. And he never threw a race in his life. Our champion bronco-buster—where is he? Where's 'Spud' Murphy, who separated the Cold Springs poker sharps from their dust every little while?

"It makes me sick. We haven't anything left here to brag about but a herd of sharpshooters. A — of a lot of good that does. We can't all be wearing armor-plate just because you nimble-fingered gents are quick on the draw and pretty danged slow at everything else. I've said enough."

And he abruptly sat down, throwing a well-meaning glance at Big Ed.

"Which you shore said a whole lot," exclaimed Ed. Then he turned to the gunmen, who were looking anything but pleased. "Gents, I hope you-all don't get peeved none at the Kid yere, jest because he's some thoughtless in his talk, maybe. At the same time, I rises to remark he ain't so plumb wrong. Now, I ain't allowin' to do no dictatin'—none whatever, in this yere, er, this—ah, eemergency, but I does go so fer as to state emphatic that Chute Gulch could get along a whole lot better if they wasn't so many obseequies."

There were a few timid nods of approval; glances without special meaning exchanged. All seemed trying to feel each other out—sparring for an opening, as it were. Evidently it was a situation calling for close and confidential confab. Soon chairs were hitched closer together, and presently the gun-fighters were engaged in a subdued consultation, though it was manifestly earnest.

The result was that Doc Benton was put forward as the spokesman for the crowd. Doc rose and cleared his throat, shifting his .45 a little more to the front, for ready reference. Doc had a reputation for talking as he shot—straight and quick. He said:

"We-all bin a-listenin' hard to whut you-all bin a-sayin' about lettin' up in this yere blood-spillin'. Which we indorse them expressions as words of wisdom. Feelin' that-away about it, the boys yere would like to ask, with all doo respect to Big Ed and the Kid yere, how you-all calkilate to redoose the mortality rate in this yere man's town. I yields the floor."

With a grand flourish of his sombrero, Doc resumed his seat.

"I'll take care of that end of it," exclaimed Ruiz, jumping to his feet. "You boys indorse the proposition and give me power to act and I'll deliver the goods. You say you are for a let-up in the funerals. All right; let's see if you are. Here's a resolution." He waved a sheet of paper. "I'll read it. Listen:

"WHEREAS, We, the citizens of Chute Gulch, here assembled, view with alarm the increasing death rate due to senseless shootings, and deplore the loss to this community of useful members thereof, and

"WHEREAS, We point with pride to our achievements in the past and our faith in the future, therefore be it

"RESOLVED, That we, the law-abiding citizens of this town, agree and declare that gun-play in Chute Gulch be stopped, except as a last resort; and, be it further

"RESOLVED, That Joe Ruiz is hereby instructed to bring about a reduction in shooting of citizens, by the best means that he can devise, and we hereby give him full power to act'."

Ruiz had been a ward politician of note, and it was not the first preamble and resolutions that he had ever penned.

"There you are are," he shouted; "you fellows pass that and I'll see that it is safe for a man to move around in Chute Gulch, say his say and play his own game without courting sudden death. There hasn't been

a killing in this town since I've been here that any one of you is proud of, except, of course, a couple of horse-thieves. Am I right?"

"Which you shorely are."

"*Yip, yip; yeow.*"

"Three cheers fer Joe Ruiz, the game Kid."

"Which we're for him u-nani-mouse."

These and more of the same general trend were the expressions yelled and screamed. They were taken off their feet. They threw their hats in the air and yelled their unbounded approval. A delegation picked Ruiz up and carried him about on their shoulders, finally depositing him on the platform. Realizing it to be the psychological moment, Ruiz shouted—

"Are you ready for the question?"

"Question, question. Put 'er, put 'er."

"All in favor signify by saying aye."

They shook the building with the thunder of their affirmative, and a fusilade of shots went skyward through the shingles by way of emphasis.

"Contrary——"

Several hands reached for gun handles. One or two of the boys whirled and crouched in an attitude of belligerent challenge, their tense eyes sweeping the room.

The situation was strikingly paradoxical. A negative vote on that resolution of life meant instant death. There was none.

"The resolution is carried unanimously. It is a victory for peace," announced Ruiz in even tones.

There were more *yips* and *yeows*, and the ability of the shingles to keep out the rain was further impaired.

"The boys shore done their part noble," observed Big Ed, when he could be heard. "Which it is now up to you, Kid."

For answer Ruiz rolled a barrel out from under the platform and up-ended it in front of the crowd. Again he mounted the rostrum and held up his hand for silence. Curiosity helped him get it.

"Boys," he said, smilingly, "you passed the peace resolution without a dissenting vote. You gave me full power to act. I thank you for the expression of confidence. It is fine and dandy. I have confidence in you boys. For keeping their word, give me the men of the West."

"*Yeow, yip, yip,*" came in thunderous acknowledgement of the verbal floral token.



"NOW, the only way to put a stop to gun-play is to quit toting guns. So you boys just step forward and drop your artillery in the barrel. And don't crowd," admonished Ruiz.

A hush fell on the crowd. Then came a burst of disapproval, all talking at once.

"Not me."

"Not on your life."

"Which we don't, none."

"Whut?"

In this wise the gun-fighters repudiated themselves. The peace resolution, giving Ruiz full power to act, was lost sight of in the surly objections to disarmament. No unarmed peace for them.

Ruiz finally got their attention, albeit a few continued grumbling objections. He said:

"Packing a gun is only a habit. You don't need it. Use your fists. I never carried a gun in my life. Nobody will shoot an unarmed man. A six-shooter is a perpetual challenge. Into the barrel with 'em. You gave me full power to act, and I'm acting."

Full power to act!

The silence that followed was death-like. The announcement brought vacant looks, staring eyes, clenched teeth, pale cheeks. Fright and horror and despair showed here and there.

Texas George stood up, his right hand resting on the butt of his gun. Then he crouched and stared about menacingly.

"I'd admire to see any son of a coyote take my weapon," he challenged, hoarsely.

"Nobody's going to try to take it, Texas. You are going to give it up yourself," said Ruiz, calmly. "You voted for that resolution. You never broke your word in your life, and you ain't going back on it now. I know you better than you know yourself. Come, drop it in the barrel, Texas."

"Which he's shore got you whar the ha'r is short," observed Big Ed.

It was true, and nobody knew it better than Texas himself. All eyes were upon him. On his action depended the success or failure of the peace meeting. He knew that, also. Texas was a brave man. Nobody would have had the temerity to suggest otherwise. About the only thing he feared was to go back on his word.

Texas stared about vacantly for a moment. Then he slowly took his six-shooter from its holster and laid it across the palm

of his left hand, almost tenderly. As he reverently fondled it a lump came in his throat. He glanced toward the barrel and his face clouded. Again his gaze rested on his .45.

Within him a great fight was going on. He had given his word—a sacred thing with Texas. Lovingly he patted the weapon. He seemed oblivious that he was the cynosure of all eyes—that upon his act depended the safety of a citizenry. The only thing he could think of was that he was about to part with a trusted friend. Suddenly he lifted the revolver to his lips and kissed it fervently, his eyes glistening.

Then Texas turned toward the barrel, his Colt's on the palms of his two hands. His step was uncertain and his attitude that of a man overtaken by a great grief. He uttered no word. Slowly the barrel was approached, as one might approach a grave to lay in it his first-born. Presently it was within reach. Hesitating, he glanced appealingly at Ruiz.

"Would you like to say something, Texas?" asked Ruiz, kindly.

Texas stood behind the barrel and faced the crowd. He spoke with evident effort.

"It's hell, boys, jest hell—t' give up Old Betsy. I ain't likin' it a whole lot. But I ain't never broke my word none; and that's whatever. In my time I've seen friends pass in their checks—friends I honed to. I seen my pore old dad shuffle off when he pined to stay. But nothin' ain't ever hurt me like this. Old Betsy yere—" he stopped to caress the weapon—"she's shorely bin a friend a feller could tie to. Which she ain't never went back on me none. She's the truest, the purtiest, the finest pal any man ever did have in—his—whole — life. Good-by, old pardner."

His voice quivered as he raised the gun to his lips.

Suddenly his expression changed. As he looked up his quick eyes beheld a sinister face peering through the partly-open side door, the yellow light within playing upon it, the black night for a background. He saw a leveled arm, the hand holding a six-shooter pointed at Ruiz. From the gun of Texas a tongue of flame spat toward the

hate-drawn face at the door. Two bullets passed each other going in opposite directions. The interval between the two shots was so infinitesimal that they sounded like one discharge. But it was enough.

The man at the door pitched forward, his smoking weapon clattering across the smooth dance floor and bringing up against the barrel, as though knocking for admission. A red stream poured from a hole in his forehead.

Doc Benton stepped to the fallen man, gun in hand, and turned him face-up with his foot.

"Gents," he said, "the party on the floor yere, in the attytod of peace, is the Cherokee half-breed whut our friend and feller-townsman, Mr. Ruiz, punched in the jaw last night fer obstreperous conduct."

"Which a punch on the jaw ain't final, none whatever," sagely observed "Rattlesnake" Dick, addressing nobody in particular.

Ruiz winced, ever so slightly. He glanced down at the dead body of the man who had sought his life, and then up at the lamp overhead, bearing mute evidence of the deadly intent of the half-breed. He realized that he owed his life to the fact that Texas had sustained his reputation for quick shooting. He turned to Texas. Their eyes met. Texas slowly extended his arm until he held the weapon poised over the yawning barrel. His face was inscrutable, his gaze steadfast.

Now it was Ruiz who was fighting the inward battle. Being a man of impulsive action, the battle was brief. With a quick movement he caught the big man's hand.

"Don't drop it, Texas," he said. "It might go off and—hurt—somebody. Besides," he smiled, "Old Betsy is—a friend —of—mine."

They clasped each other's hands, with all the fervor of the West. Both seemed relieved, and both happy. They stood there, hands a-grip. Neither could think of the adequate word.

"I moves that this yere meetin' adjourn, siney die," exclaimed Doc Benton.

"Hearing no objection," said Ruiz—he paused slightly and looked around, "it is so ordered."



Singarkh Rubies

by
Arthur James Hayes

Author of "The Smiler," "The Boss of Lonesome Lake," etc.

LERCH'S Luger pulled a little to the left. It used to worry him a lot when we crouched together in the Tan Yoi caves on the eastern fringe of the Gobi Desert. He thought the mechanism was jolted a little out of alignment the night that San Kee threw him off the sacred parapet of the Ming Kong monastery outside of Yo Wai Ko.

Anybody else would have stressed the miraculous side of the incident. He rode fifty-five miles on a mangy Tibetan mule after that, with the raw ends of ten or twelve broken ribs grating each other every time the mule put foot to the ground. He didn't tell me that until the issue was raised by direct questioning. He just mentioned it to back up his theory that the little steel-jacketed bullet must slam the left side of the barrel a little harder than the right.

Lerch's eyes were as black as ebony and his face was yellow and wrinkled from years of desert sun and desert sand. He wore a real queue and a fiber arch in his mouth to give him the peculiar guttural tone that made his clicking speech pass for real Chinese. There was a little scar over each eye where the surgeon of a French cruiser cut out tiny triangular flaps of skin and stitched the edges together to give his eyes the oblique cast that fooled you until he opened up with a commonplace observation in good old American slang.

I had always thought that disguises were a matter of fiction chiefly, or, if actually

employed, were glue and fake hair affairs calculated to deceive no one but the party who's paying a good fat fee to the agency to have some hated rival shadowed. But then there were a lot of things I didn't know when the Moi San branch of the Suchau railroad died a natural death outside of Lunkow.

I didn't know that there was as much yellow mud in the world as you can accumulate in fifteen feet of a Chinese back country road, or that Japanese capitalists could lie about salaries with such utter *sang froid* or that I had all the fundamental instincts of a gun-runner, highbinder and Chinese river pirate.

It takes the lonesomeness and strangeness and cussedness of the Orient to make a man from the States look himself in the eye in a cracked mirror and see his soul right down to his toes.

I had eighty-eight dollars "Mex" in my khaki jeans when the steel rails and franchise and enthusiasm of the Suchau railway petered out all at the same time. I felt like converting the sum into brass "cash" and tying the strings about my neck before wading out into the muddy river to tell a few disinterested sampan men that Nothing was just now engaged in going nowhere.

Moy Sing's tiny curio-shop has a species of straw-colored liquid that is guaranteed to make a chronic "valley tan" imbibor believe that crude alcohol is a temperance

beverage. I thought it would help sustain me and the "cash" until the mud in the stinking little stream bed sustained both of us. Moy once ran a "hop" joint on Mott Street before that select section of town was denatured for tourist patronage.

I told him to do his worst and sat down at the little screen-shielded lacquered teak table until the stuff was dished out. A tall Mongol sat opposite me, staring straight ahead with that unblinking intensity that reminds one of a jade joss. I noticed that his jacket was a fine quality of embroidered silk and that he wore boots of turned Russian leather. The Russian boots suggested the Simlayang country and just to have the silence broken I asked him how the Foo Kiang bridge was getting along.

He smothered my halting pidgin English with a sing-song chatter that rolled on until I was tempted to brain him with a chair. Then he subsided and stared at the picture of the purple dragon chasing its own tail around a big Ankalong porphyry vase.

The conversation had lost most of its spontaneity. I sipped the fiery dope that Moy distilled from lentils and watercress and Heaven knows what else, and tried to figure out just how big a hole eighty-eight dollars "Mex" would punch in the seven thousand miles between one stranded civil engineer and a Barbary Coast lunch-counter.

Staring straight ahead the big Mongol put his lean yellow fists in his silk pockets and then inserted his right hand in his left sleeve. Hitting the hop was still good form in those days and I watched him curiously under the impression that he was preparing the paraphernalia for cooking a pill.

Then he slid his clenched fist stealthily along the ivory inlaid teak and opened it under my eyes.

"Slant that," he whispered, "and ask me if there's more where it came from."

In the palm of his hand reposed an egg-shaped ruby of the most brilliant claret tint that I have ever seen. It seemed to fairly quiver with red flashes of refracted light. My surprise at the unexpected speech and the magnificence of the stone left me momentarily without a come-back.

The Mongol grinned. It was a good old tooth-revealing grin of the kind that's labeled all over, "Made in the U. S. A." I grinned back and nearly spilled the ruby in my eagerness to grab his hand. He gave

me a bone-crunching grip and slid over toward me.

"Thought it would get a rise," he whispered. "I can't look at it myself without pulling a palpitation of the heart. If somebody would only move Fifth Avenue over alongside of us, we could push it across for ten thousand bucks or better."

"Oh, yes, the stone!" I exclaimed. "That's part of it, of course. But the big surprise was your prying off the regular American lingo. Educated back in God's country, I suppose?"

"Yes," he said quietly. "Which isn't remarkable, seeing that I was born there."

Even then I missed the meaning.

"I'm not a Chink," he explained patiently. "I was born with black eyes, and worked up the rest when I got my honorable discharge from the *Olympia* after that little rumpus in Manila Bay. A French surgeon fixed up my eyes for a little Cochin China job his Government had on hand. And the East got into my blood somehow. The mysterious patient, listening dreaming East has kept me here, chasing the fag ends of its secrets, prying into its lonesome temples and out-of-the-way places, always aching for the big haul that will place me back in my native heath with a wad that would choke a crocodile."

"I've been looking you over the last few days," he continued. "Ah Foy, the native paymaster tipped me that the rail-laying was about over. I knew the war would queer development. And I thought we could hit it off together."

"My stake may get me as far as Manila," I explained gloomily, "but it won't provide capital for any more heathen Chinese railroads. If you're figuring on taking up this project where the Japs left off to grab Port Arthur——"

He grinned, shook his head and very deliberately spilled my drink on the floor.

"You won't need that for this little soiree," he declared. "I never saw the man who couldn't think better sober."

"Shoot," I said. "Only it's got to be almighty absorbing to make me forget how keen I am to slant the Golden Gate over the prow of the first outbound Pacific Mail boat."

He twirled the egg-shaped ruby deftly and set it to spinning silently on the little teak table.

"It's that," he said, his voice tense with

eagerness. "I'll spill my scheme and if you can look me in the eye when I'm through, and pass a gentleman's word that you're not interested, I'll pay for the Chink champagne and stake you to a ticket home."

It sounded good both ways from the ace and I said so. He proffered me a smokable cigaret and began.



"BACK in the heyday of the Sirgarkh monastery," he said, "some local dignitary was moved to present the Murmuring Lama with an ivory Buddha. The material had been carted up the San Lun passes before the British occupation of India, and I guess the work of art as finally rigged in the prayer-room of the Murmuring Lama, must have consisted of a thousand or more small blocks of intricately fitted ivory. It was conventional enough in design, being of the cross-legged roly-poly style.

"I know a museum or two on the outside that would flash fifty thousand for that little piece of sacred art without batting an eye. In fact, it was with the highly commendable idea of stealing it that I first learned to patter Buddhist prayers and discourse upon the concept of Nirvana.

"After wearing the sacred seal on my forehead for six months and praying a few million prayers, I worked up in confidence enough to get some of the monastic gossip. About that time a severed head appeared on a bamboo pike in front of the seventh gate. It seemed that some backsliding Buddhist monk had clipped one of the jewels from the ruby robe, with the laudable intention of hocking it in some Khotan pawnshop.

"That head interested me. So did the sacred robe. I'd never heard of the thing before. In a month I had progressed in the good graces of the Murmuring Lama to such an extent that I was praying before the jade altar. On it reposed the ivory joss. My first glimpse of it almost made me laugh aloud at my original scheme to yank it out during one of the Nirvana trances of the sacred lamas.

"I couldn't have carted one side of the thing six feet, to begin with, and after I'd slanted the way it was decked out I didn't care for a carload of the stuff. For looped around its neck and shoulders, and descending to its knees, were successive coils of the most magnificent rubies that I have

ever seen. They constituted practically a whole garment for this slant-eyed image. There must have been five hundred or more stones in the sacred robe. The smallest one was as large as a walnut.

"In that great vaulted tower, with the light from the Eternal Fire flickering luridly over the scene, that robe of rubies seemed to move and undulate, with the terrific brilliancy of the refracted light. It literally made my eyes ache to watch it. And my eagerness to get it away without suffering the fate of the poor devil who had hooked the solitary stone, kept me awake nights and staring up at the star-spangled Tibetan sky, when the most ascetic of the true believers had betaken himself to his cell.

"My original plan was to steal it during the sacred trance, when those slant-eyed devils all stiffened out in some sort of hypnotic sleep, and make my getaway. Once clear of Khotan I could travel as an opium-smuggler, thus earning the goodwill of the natives, and securing myself from search by any but the British patrols. In event of being held up by the last mentioned, I thought I could buy myself through with one or two of the sparklers.

"But the British-Chinese opium misunderstanding was growing more acute all the time, and I guess the Lama received a tip from Peking that all was not well along the San Lun trail. The bleak terrace was suddenly crowded one morning with the troops of a Chinese patrol. After a whole lot of parleying the Sirgarkh monks moved bag and baggage into the Koi Wong monastery well in the interior. The sacred rubies and ivory joss went with them.

"I didn't go to Koi Wong. The change in plans was disheartening, to begin with, and I'd tried to turn a trick one time in that country that had a couple of 'three-gun' mandarins clamoring to put my head on a pike. I went back into the silk-smuggling game until the Darjiling Conference took all the profit out of that.

"A year ago I got a tip on the ruby robe. Stanley Graves, who works out of Hong-kong for the British Museum, heard that there was a sacred robe of precious stones on some ivory Buddha in a Gobi Desert monastery. He sent Tracy out to investigate. I'd worked with Tracy, and a clever lad he was, too. But a Ninghia silk caravan found him wandering half-crazed along the

Sim Kee Wo passes, with his eyeballs the even opaque tint of clouded amber.

"He never became wholly rational before he died, but he gibbered a lot about a place of mummied monks and a bronze needle that had just punctured the skin over each eye. Graves poses as a veteran archeologist, but I guess he'd never heard of the Tan Yoi monastery. I was called into conference but didn't feel obligated to spill any information.

"I wasn't interested in any effort to stick a dozen fortunes in red stones behind a lot of steel bars in a musty old curio gallery. I told him that the Tan Yoi monastery was a myth and that the opaque eyeballs were merely a matter of raw karsheesh, a sort of acid distilled from opium by-products.

"I finally persuaded him that some of the Gobi sand-rats had been the ones who fixed Vance Tracy. They are a degenerate group of pro-Mongol cave-dwellers, no larger than a ten-year-old boy and more vindictive than an Andaman Islander. I don't doubt that they'd have done for Tracy if they had caught him. But I thought I understood the story.

"Two men were holding Tracy down on his cot when I went in. I understood more of the poor devil's maunderings than they guessed. He talked about cells in red porphyry caves where mummified monks stood staring across the gloom in eternal vigil before the jade temple. I had been there. The secret of the Tan Yoi embalming process will perish, I suppose, with the last of the old long-bearded loons who still live there on the fringe of things.

"But it turns the skin a smooth even-yellow tint like aged ivory. The idea of the ruby robe being there with the ivory joss was the first good hunch I'd had in a long time. No doubt the Sirgarkh Lama had occasion to doubt the good intentions of some of the Chinese officials in the Koi Wong country. That would naturally lead him to seek a better resting-place for the sacred image. Tan Yoi well out in the southeastern portion of the Gobi Desert; was the best possible hiding-place, until Sirgarkh's immunity was again guaranteed.

"If your neck doesn't loom larger than a million pounds in negotiable rubies, we'll team it on the scheme to lift the sacred robe. I'll pass for a native interpreter. Your engineering paraphernalia will get

you by the patrols. They never hinder foreign devils who claim to be doing development work for the Government. And it's a first-class stall too. We'll take a couple of pack-mules, and a pack-saddle with a false frame, in case we get away with the loot. We can then fill the hollow frame with rubies and declare the rest of our stuff as specimens of rock and the like."

The man who calmly proposed a descent into the wildest and weirdest part of Asia, in quest of sacred jewels, held the red stone temptingly before my eyes while I weighed my decision. Moy Sing pattered in and we sent him away again to replenish our empty glasses. The flies droned in the sunlight from the tiny windows, and the singsong chatter of the yellow devils in the little dusty, hog-infested street came to us softened by silken screens.

I had fared into the East with the old story-book idea that the Orient was a treasure-house. I had found it more of a slave mart than anything else. Its mud and smells and loneliness made me eager to shake the dust from my tattered brogans. But I didn't want to go out as I had come in—penniless.

Glancing at Lerch I noticed that he had artfully set the egg-shaped stone to spinning again. It broke my last lingering resolution and banished my last conscience qualm. After all, why should long-bearded loons burn incense before fortunes in precious stones, out in the sand cliffs where there was no one to see or heed? I extended my hand across the lacquered teak and he received it with his hearty bone-crunching grip.



AT LERCH'S instigation I made another demand for my back pay that evening. We needed cash for outfitting. The stolid Chinese paymaster was very oily and very affable and exceedingly obdurate.

"No ketchum tael," he explained regretfully. "Mebbe come topside Kiukiang—mebbe no fetch. No have—no givee. Ketchum chop-chop plen'ee taels—sure givee. No got—how can do?"

The paymaster's logic seemed good. I turned away disgusted and was about to leave the little corrugated-iron office when Lerch interfered. He stepped by me quickly and grasped the astounded Celestial by the queue. Then the old Luger was

thrust against the brown nankeen jacket, and the adventurer's oily Chinese lingo flowed forth in singsong waves. It terminated as abruptly as it began.

"Tael's," he said.

The terrified Chinaman broke into a patter of explanation and opened the steel safe. Within reposed hundreds of silver slugs. He counted out one hundred and twenty of them and slipped them into a bag. This he tossed across the counter.

Lerch grinned.

"I don't like Japs," he remarked, "but this sort of squares the Masada Saruki crowd. They hadn't intended to beat you after all. And they employ Chinese paymasters because the Manchu devils are so proverbially honest."

The paymaster was blinking at us benignly as if nothing had occurred. I looked at his wizened mask-like countenance, adequate shield for any emotion, and envied Lerch his striking disguise. Foreign devils are easy!

In Miukong, that cluster of thatched huts where the somber sandstone cliffs grow blue against the desert edge of Gobi, we outfitted. It was there that we met San Kee, the giant Mongol from Urga who had been Lerch's faithful retainer for years. San Kee bought the mules and the rice and tea, haggling with more skill and greater patience than even Lerch possessed.

We watched the caravans come in, great undulating lines of footsore camels and shrouded figures, the silk bales covered with dust-crusts and tarpaulins and secured by braided hemp nets.

Many of them had traveled the long trail from Uliassutai and in the miserable bazaar shops I glimpsed Slavic types from distant Kondo and Indian silk and meerscham buyers from Karakash and Khotan.

"At Miuking the trails divide," Lerch explained. "The Russo-Siberian trade-routes lead north and west, touching at Turfan and Urmtsi, and then swinging back again, perhaps, toward Urga or Maimatchin. The Chinese territorial trade goes east, watering and resting at Sachau and Ninghia or even crossing the Kuenlun ranges for the more favorable forage country below. The Tan Yoi country is the wildest and bleakest and least traveled territory in the world, not excepting the

famous 'Never-Never' stretches of West Australia.

"A monastery located there would be the very last-trench stronghold of religious fanaticism. And incidentally it would be the ultimate storehouse for jewels and hiding-place for political refugees. Tracy probably met his fate at the hands of some individual or group who suspected him of espionage. They may have never suspected that he was interested in the religious relics of the place.

"That's why I'm anxious to go in there apparently 'four square' and open as men on a Government geologic survey. The Celestial mind moves crab-like in its deductions, and the more open we are in professing Governmental affiliations, the less they will suspect us of being in there to take a census of Peking undesirables. If they had suspected Tracy of designs on the jewels they would simply have put his head on a pike. But blinding him and turning him loose was a diabolically clever way of issuing warning against spying activities."

San Kee, to whom the Tan Yoi trail was reasonably familiar, rode ahead, leading the pack-mules. I glanced away to the right and up toward the serrated tops of the Kuenlun range. A hot wind wailed by day among the sand-sculptured cliffs and buttes of the great gray desert. At night when the great sand-stretches cooled and became areas of high pressure, a chill breeze blew from the north, sending sand wraiths to dance ghostlike in the white moonlight, and wailing and gibbering in the shadows until one almost believed the tales of the Chinese damned spirits exiled to Gobi.

Lerch was full of tales of the country. Riding beside me along the rocky trail or through pockets of red sand, with San Kee swaying and rocking loosely in his native saddle just ahead, he would tell stories of men who had gone into the Tan Yoi country and who had never come out. I thought it was a queer policy to pursue, but the strange adventurer paid me the compliment of assuming that I was as utterly lacking in nerves as he himself.

"You'll remember the orchid-craze that swept Europe for a second time about ten years ago," he said. "Well, it brought orchid-seekers from all over the world into Khotan. They outfitted there to enter the desert. There was a wild rumor about

a strange Orchid of Heaven growing in a secluded valley below Tan Yoi. It was like the old yarns of El Dorado that sent the youth of Europe crazy with gold fever in the sixteenth century.

"But lots of men—canny gray-bearded old scientists at that—believed it. Their bones are bleaching all over Gobi. Sandstorms got some and thirst got others and the silence and stillness of the days and the wailing winds of the nights spilled the sanity of the rest.

"They wailed and laughed and sang out of the blue shadows of the sunset, scaring the Tinghai Hai camel-men into fits, and investing the Kuenlun Hills with more varieties of devils than you'd meet in 'Paradise Lost.' Even stolid old San Kee swears that he recognized among them the voice of his own grandfather, to whom he had been insolent in early childhood.

"There's gold there. Old Angus McAllen swore to that. And the last time I saw him he was joining the crazy quest for the Orchid of Heaven. Had his daughter with him, the old fool that he was. It was back in '93 when I first entered the country. I told him that it was a crime to take a chubby solemn-eyed lass of nine into the desert on a fool's chase for a dream flower. She was a pretty youngster, too, with long curly copper-tinted hair that hung in heavy strands over her shoulders.

"They rode away together, under the protecting wing of an opium caravan until they had passed Sachau. Then they struck off for themselves, with four cutthroat Minkang coolies to tend the mules and make camp. I can see that kid as if it were yesterday, tiny and chubby and solemn-eyed, grasping the high Persian saddle with childish desperation. She rode a white mule beside her father's big slate-gray beast. They'd been pals, he said, since her mother's death, and he couldn't bear to leave her alone in England."

Lerch stared away across the dreary vista of desert country.

"I hope the kid passed out quick-like," he said suddenly. "I'd hate like the devil to think of her suffering much from thirst."



AFTER that we rode in silence. On the fifth day out we pitched camp in the lee of a great porphyry cliff, erupting suddenly out of the coarse red sand. It was the first outpost of the

great porphyry phalanx that splits Gobi into two distinct deserts at its southern end.

"We're in hell's pet playground at last," said Lerch.

He stared across the camp-fire toward the moonlit cliffs.

"That stone I flashed on you in Lunkow—it came out of here, of course. I had just rounded a bend in the trail when my mule shied at something. It was a giant Mongol, his head half-severed from his body. In a bag around his neck was the stone. But what struck me at the time as remarkable was the condition of his eyes. They were a smooth, even, dull yellow, like—Tracy's!

"He'd been left there, I suppose, after the knife that hurtled down from the cliff above had cut him out of the saddle. I don't doubt that the mule he rode didn't even miss a stride. They're canny brutes, and they always know the way to the next water station. That's why so many riderless critters drift around the trails here."

San Kee sat in close to the blaze, glancing over his shoulder from time to time and listening with an intentness that got on my nerves. The shrieking of the wind as sudden darkness enveloped us, was made more uncanny by the firelight on the faces of my companions.

Lerch with his strange artificially-tilted eyes and acquired stoicism was hardly distinguishable from the true Mongol who squatted next to him. Both of them seemed to epitomize the fatalism that had sent them into all sorts of situations with no other evidence of emotion than the shrugging of a shoulder or the faintest ripple of interest across their bronzed countenances.

Tea and rice and lentils made up our repasts. I'd never liked any of them, but the fatigue of the day's journeying and the chill night wind gave them a sudden and welcome savor. The other two ate with chop-sticks, the white man so deftly that I knew he would pass muster in an assembly of Celestial critics.

I recall staring at them with the same detached interest the next day just before the legions of sand-rats bore down on us with wild shrill screams. We had been riding through a deep defile, with the seamed and knobbed walls of red porphyry rising almost perpendicularly on either side. The trail rose gradually until we emerged again on a sort of plateau, studded with huge wind-worn boulders. San Kee in the lead,

glanced back at us, pulled up and indulged in a short conversation with Lerch. The latter turned to me.

"Unship your rifle," he directed. "It's the best kind of ambush territory and the caves over to the west are full of sand-rats. Thirty seconds might mean all the difference in the world where your head rested."

I threw my gun across the pommel of the Persian saddle and in utter silence the little cavalcade resumed its march. Then out of the stillness a rifle cracked sharply and the red sand rose in a sudden puff before San Kee's mule. A second and third followed and the tall Mongol sagged in his saddle and toppled to the ground.

Lerch's Luger barked once, and then the screeching devils were on us. From all sides they poured into the trail, firing ancient British muskets and shrieking like fiends. I caught detached glimpses of oblique eyes, red with fanatical excitement, bronzed, flat faces, flying queues and gray beards. Then like a swarm of loathsome spiders they were on top of us. I shot into the mass at pointblank range, and the changed note in the screeching appraised me of the success of my fire.

Then descending rifle butts ended the brief struggle. I opened my eyes on Lerch, sitting opposite me in the gloom of the prison-cave, grinning sardonically at our captors. Blood was trickling down his cheek and the brown nankeen of his jacket was soaked over the left shoulder.

My head ached with a jarring throb that made it difficult to keep my eyes open even in the dim light of the cell. My shoulder was so swollen I could not move it without exquisite twinges of pain. Gradually the floor ceased to heave and undulate and the first wave of nausea passed off.

"Well," said Lerch casually, "it seems they've got us all right."

"So it would appear," I replied, striving to make my tones properly casual.

"They must have fetched you a corking wallop," he added. "You slept through the last ten miles of the trek, for which you ought to be thankful. I had to walk."

"What's the game?" I asked. "I guess our geologic expedition play has fozzled."

He nodded.

"I don't rightly savvy their lingo," he declared. "It's neither Manchu nor Mongol. I guess it leans more to the Tatar than anything else. We're all out

of luck regardless. We're to be hauled up shortly before the Red Lama, whoever the devil that is."

"And our story?" I queried.

"I'll flash a mandarin button," he said. "You throw a high and mighty fit and I'll interpret for you. That means that we feel our way along. Better say you're British. They savvy that. They know what happens in Tibet when an Englishman is waylaid and murdered. May serve us in good stead."

The guards stared at us curiously while we talked. It was some satisfaction to know that not a syllable of our conversation carried any meaning to them.

"And San Kee?" I asked.

"Dead," he responded. "He wasn't rightly in on the festivities at all."

There seemed to be nothing else to say. The situation would have made any spoken speculation decidedly unpleasant. I thought of the orchid-hunters who had never returned and of the big Mongol of the stolen ruby sprawled out grotesquely in the red sand of the desert trail. Then there rose before me the vision of the screeching, firing half-naked mob that had ambushed us on the little plateau.

The door of the cell was of wood and the rest of it had the appearance of having been hewed from the solid rock. A tiny aperture about four inches square supplied all the air. The atmosphere was heavy with a stale aromatic odor that reminded me vaguely of a museum. I couldn't define the exact memory counterpart of that strange odor—then. When they led me out to answer to the Red Lama I suddenly understood.

Lerch went first. He didn't return. After an interminable wait four of the little gnome-like wretches came for me. It was a relief to be even walking down the echoing corridors of the underground monastery, lit only by the flickering torches carried by the guards. The atmosphere became heavy with a strange scent of stale sandalwood and myrrh. Abruptly the reason was revealed.



IN A great arched passageway stood two rows of silent figures, staring at us with sightless yellow eyes. Each stood stiffly erect in a sort of niche groined out of the stone. The yellow silk robes were heavy with dust

and grime, but the shaven heads shone like polished ivory. I could not repress a shudder as I stared at the mummified priests of Toi Yan. I had heard vague rumors of such a place bandied about the tea-rooms of Hongkong and mentioned in barrack chin-fests on Corregidor.

Now my skepticism vanished before the awful evidence of the monastics' secret art. Why the generations of monks should have been preserved through the centuries to stare with unseeing eyes into the grime and gloom of that underground passage was a mystery that even time has not solved.

The labyrinth of passages remained unvarying in shape and content. We must have traversed a score of similar sanctuaries of the mummied dead before we emerged into a larger room. It was hung with great black velvet curtains and lit with an enormous hanging oil lamp in which a flickering purple flame sailed around in stately circles. The floor was covered with fiber mats of a design that I had seen on one occasion in Moy Sing's curio-shop. It might have been a common enough pattern. But in my awed frame of mind the circumstance became something actually reassuring!

Then we ascended several stairs, emerging upon a level from which fresh air blew in a welcome breeze. We had emerged from the depths of the labyrinth. The course now led out on a little parapet from which the gleaming blue and gold porphyry buttes were visible in the ruddy sunset. This portion of the ancient monastery was built of great unmortared blocks, somewhat resembling a Chinese pagoda.

We were situated upon an eminence that gave us a commanding view of the surrounding country. I have no doubt that a practised eye behind a good field-glass could have picked out any approaching cavalcade while still five or ten miles away. It accounted admirably for the success of the ambushade. I almost laughed at the naive simplicity with which we had given ourselves into the enemy's hands. Even Lerch, the expatriate, had not anticipated every contingency!

My meditations were broken off abruptly. I was thrust through the last heavy portières and into a great groined chamber.

A huge laminated jade platform rose before me, cut with queer figures in bas-relief, and supporting a huge porcelain joss.

Before the altar hung a big jasper lamp, with a flickering purple flame describing stately circles on the sea of sacred oil.

Below the altar stood a figure in white. The flaring purple light from the cobalt-impregnated oil made it rather hard to discern the features. Then I realized that I was staring into the wide, level blue eyes of a girl. She was slender and rather tall, with great heavy braids of red hair hanging down across her shoulders. The features were small, regular and strangely impassive.

My astonishment was not too great to permit me to notice that she wore about her neck, on a golden chain, a graven jade amulet, set with a single immense emerald. A full minute must have elapsed, with the two of us staring like graven images. Then she spoke:

"You come with a man who speaks with a lying tongue," she said slowly in English. The words were pronounced in an unaccented and mechanical fashion that bespoke rustiness of use. "He comes to steal as others have come. He spoke in the language of my race after first talking the tongue of the Manchus. And you?"

"I came with him," I said. "You know not on what mission we came, yet your sand-rats attacked with treachery, killing San Kee and making us captives."

She lifted a white hand to the amulet and smiled slightly.

"I am white," she said with dignity. "I know the heart of the whites. They come always for the shining stones. Always they die, wandering about the wild passes with their eyes hardened with karsheesh! So will you die and the other one, who speaks in two tongues and lies in both."

She tapped a little hammered-bronze murmuring gong, with a tiny teak wand, and the tinkling summons brought a gnome-faced little Manchu around from the back of the altar. He stood blinking at me with bloodshot eyes, and twisting his long lean hands. Their color, a bright crimson, first suggested blood.

The girl, whom I concluded to be acting as a sort of vestal custodian for the Sacred Flame, pointed toward him.

"On his hands," she said slowly, "is the scarlet flame of the karsheesh. He embalms the mummied monks that the centuries may pass over them like days over a child. All who come for the Sacred Stones

leave with their veins on fire with that flame."

The blinking dwarf leered toothlessly, his shrunken figure, bloodshot eyes and mud-colored garments making him the most repulsive individual I have ever seen. The menace of those claw-like hands, glistening with the scarlet oil, sent a shudder through my frame.

The strange beauty was smiling.

"Now," she said, dismissing with a gesture the fawning chemist, "perhaps we shall understand each other."

There was a long silence during which I stared about me, at the groined porphyry roof, the great laminated altar and the hideous, leering porcelain Buddha. I was at a loss how to proceed, and the lingering vision of that cavern-dwelling mystic whose shrunken frame was poisoned with his own loathsome concoctions, sent my mind racing back to the Tracy incident.

"I would ask you," she said after a pause, "if the things I speak are dreams of the desert night, or real memories. I came here as a tiny girl, lost and hungry and frightened, riding a white mule. The Great Lama was dead that day, but before the Nirvana chant was raised to the stars, he had said that the next to tend the Sacred Flame would come out of the east. My mule carried me into the court terrace when they were bearing his body to the place of mummied priests.

"All the years Foy Yan, the keeper of the tombs, has laughed, when we are alone, saying that it was not for me, but for the Red Lama's brother, high priest of Sirgarkh, that the prophecy was made. But Foy Yan had the true Sirgarkh priest stabbed to death on the trail. Now his power, through me, is great, although he works at the dead of night with jars and powders and the scarlet oil of karsheesh making the dead monks like ivory statues.

"My heart is sad and cries out for the dream places. I have seen, with the old man who was my father, great buildings, with domes like pearl and others standing high, it seems in my dream mind, as mountains. And great boats that carried us over water-deserts and women of my own flesh and soldiers and black faces and music. Is this of the mind or is it madness from the silence?"

"It is of the mind," I assured her gravely. "You have no doubt seen the minarets and

mosques of the Golden Horn, the P. & O. liners and British and native Indian regiments. Eleven years is a long time for a child to remember, no doubt. That is why fact and fancy has so combined in your vague memories."

"It is better there, is it not?" she asked with sudden sharp eagerness, "than here where old men pray and think and die to become mummies in the still caverns?"

"Yes," I said, equally anxious to work upon her wistful mood. "This is as the grave itself, beside the world with its light and music and beautiful places. Were you once to see the places from whence you came, you would never return to the gloom of this underground monastery of insane sand-dwellers."

"I would think," she said.



THE gong clanged again and my guards stepped up beside me. We returned through the winding labyrinth, through the halls of mummified priests, back to the cell with its great wooden door. In the farther shadows Lerch spoke up.

"McAllen's girl," he said. "I recognized the red hair and blue eyes as soon as that confounded purple flame gave me a chance. I think there's potassium in that floating wick. It makes it hard to see."

"Did she talk about the sacred rubies of Sirgarkh to you?" I asked.

"Accused me of coming with you to steal them," he said, "which, by way of implication, is a first-class admission. I didn't dare to sound any of the monks out on the subject, but I've asked about the girl. Seems there was a prophecy made by the Red Lama about the next guardian of the Sacred Fire coming out of the east. And then the white mule just naturally came in for forage. It would be — common-place to any one but a Celestial mystic, mad with loneliness and meditation."

"So she told me," I said. "Also making some choice promises about sending us out to trek the back trail with our eyes like Tracy's."

"She won't," he said with conviction. "She's crazy to get out herself. I fired her imagination a little with brilliant descriptions of the outside."

We relapsed into silence. I couldn't refrain from moiling over time and again my brief conversation with that strange

vestal virgin, standing so straight and eager before the laminated altar, in the weird shadows cast by the purple flame.

Lerch was slumbering on a bundle of straw in his corner of the cell. I stared up into the Stygian gloom until a faint gray streak of light through the tiny aperture apprised me of the advent of dawn.

It brought a wizened old monk in brown nankeen with rice and the inevitable lentils, as well as two tiny jugs of brackish water. We ate in silence. I thought Lerch was thinking intently of some peculiar method of escape. But his proposal when finally broached was not strikingly different from my own idea.

"Persuade the girl to escape with us," he said. "She has access to the Temple of Silence where the ivory joss is set up in all the glory of its ruby corselet. Save for the sentries the monks are all in their tiny cells by eight at night, crouching upon a straw mat in their endless, aimless meditations. If she agrees she can smuggle the rubies out under her own robes. The four mules they took from us guarantee a means of escape if we can locate them. That leaves only the sentries."

"We can probably rush them Moro fashion," I agreed, "if the place affords a good chain of shadows."

"Which leaves," he concluded, "the girl as the weakest link in the hypothesis."

She sent for us at noon. I guess that the trusting order of ascetics had delegated all authority in our case to her.

"I would go with you to the dream places," she said quaintly. "But for the Red Monks to know is death! How may we escape without the vengeance that follows?"

Lerch sketched the plan briefly. I was content to watch the expression in the deep, long-lashed eyes, made the more unfathomable by the strange light from the Sacred Flame. I thought that the curtains were swaying strangely behind her and broke in to caution him to speak only English. It had occurred to me that the girl's proposal to escape might have been part of the Oriental scheme of inquisition.

"For the world beyond the red rim of Gobi," he declared in conclusion, "we shall need the Sirgarkh rubies. They will purchase anything that we want, they will take us everywhere. And once beyond the porphyry plateau there is no questing vengeance!"

"Men have died," she said, "because of

the shining stones. But if you say it, who speak marvelously in two tongues, it shall be as you wish. At the sunset hour the oil is brought up for the night flame, blue with the strange chemical that Foy Yan, keeper of the tombs, mixes from the strange jade jars in his cell. After that until the sunrise all is still. There is no other who may question save the two who watch the stars at the gate, for the signs that are written in the night sky of Gobi."

We conversed at some length, talking without gesture, studiously careful to mask our emotions in order that the prying eyes of the exiled Sirgarkh monks might not detect the nature of our plotting.

"Tonight," she said finally. "When I come to you, it will be with the ruby corselet you crave under my own robes. After that we go forth to the stables and ride away in the red sands. Only—the watchers?"

"That shall be our share," assented Lerch quietly.

The gong rang and the guards stepped up beside us. Back in our cell we talked but little. Muriel McAllen had assured us that Foy Yan was preparing the vapor of blindness for the dread punishment that the strange desert-chemist inflicted upon all interlopers. Lerch cursed him heartily in remembrance of Tracy's plight, and I registered the hope that he should be one of the two detailed that night to read the glittering heavens while the other eighty-odd inmates of the Tan Yoi monastery slept or meditated.

With his watch crystal—we had not been searched in accordance with some remarkable prejudice of our captors—my companion devised a crude sort of sun-dial, by which we tabulated the changes in the single wan streak of light. At three o'clock by his Swiss timepiece the light had vanished. We had no matches, and computed a five-hour wait in utter gloom by the simple expedient of feeling the hands. Lerch fondled his Luger, discoursing nervously, I thought, for all his professed *sang froid*, upon the injuries it had received in his battle with Sim Kee up in the bleak Ming Kong passes.

Then the door swung open. We waited tensely in the utter darkness, wondering whether the newcomer was friend or foe. I slipped the little Spanish automatic out of my wrist-holster and listened.

"I am ready," said a trembling voice, in English. "Clutch my arm and I shall lead you into the night."

Lerch groped for our frightened guide and I grasped his shoulder firmly. Silently and slowly and with infinite stealth we stole through the labyrinth of mummied monks. The conversance of years enabled the girl to thread the passages with the occult accuracy that comes of the sharpened sixth sense of experience.

We emerged upon a parapet, and saw suddenly silhouetted against the clear moonlight the three pagoda-like towers that are all the architectural eminences of the cavern monastery. She pointed at the two tallest and stared at us with eyes like pools of liquid jet.

"The watchers," she whispered.

Lerch gripped my arm.

"With her," he commanded. "Bring the mules around to the side. She says they are in a cave to the west. I'll take care of the sentries."

He flattened himself into the shadows and when I called to him cautiously, did not respond. We crept around the porphyry parapet until the sudden roughness of the ground underfoot convinced me we had effected a junction with the ledge proper.



I EXPECTED Lerch to quiet the guards so effectually that the unavoidable footfalls of the mules would not cause an alarm. In that respect he failed. How, I have never known.

We found the animals in the cavern stables, munching dried grass. We proceeded quietly enough. The girl with her splendid young strength helped me to adjust the heavy pack-saddles. I was about to suggest that we put the stones in their planned place of concealment but deferred on the issue of time.

We led them forth, their small pointed-hoofs ringing hollowly upon the parapet and sending fragments of rock clattering down the cliff. We were almost at the main gate when a scream rose shrilly in the night. Then I heard the burst of Lerch's Luger and saw the lurid flame sharp against the shadows.

The girl and I threw stealth to the winds. We lashed the mules into a gallop and bore down on the main gate. Lerch, his face streaked with blood, a black smudge in

the moonlight against his yellow skin, swung up beside me.

"We'll have to run for it," he gasped.

Lights flashed on everywhere about us. Screeching figures in breech-clouts, with skinny arms and flying queues erupted out of the holes in the wall, attacking with their bare hands. Lerch's gun spat repeatedly into the charging host. I saw a flat, wild countenance over the shoulder of my plunging mule and fired pointblank. Another screeching monk leaped into the path and I felt rather than saw my mouse-colored beast ride him down. The girl cried out sharply and swayed in her saddle.

Hands sought to claw us out of the saddle, but the terror of our animals, accentuated by the pistol shots, carried us through the throng massed at the gate. Even our runty pack-animal smashed his way through the screaming mob, and the four mules bore us down the echoing pass.

Lerch turned in his saddle and fired several shots at the pursuers. Two or three of the wild, half-naked figures crumpled up in the moon-flooded trail and lay still. The others spurned them and came on.

Then the wailing winds of Gobi hurled the red sand in our faces and we knew that our lathered beasts had carried us clear of the porphyry plateau.

"They won't follow us," said Lerch exultantly, "for the very good reason that they haven't transportation. The Government patrol visits tri-annually with supplies. I guess it's their only regular means of communication. And a chance caravan passing tomorrow or the day after, couldn't make any better time than we can.

When fully ten miles had been put between us and the frenzied shrieks of the despoiled monks, Lerch drew up his mule.

The girl rode up beside him.

"The sacred rubies?" he queried.

She threw back the coarse folds of her nankeen robe. The moonlight shimmered on her straight young shoulders and slim white throat. It shone, too, on a veritable garment of immense rubies, that glittered and undulated and clicked like a vest of chain mail, as the girl's supple young figure swayed easily with the pace of the mule. I stared at them with eyes that seemed dazzled by the pale flare of the moonlight on their shifting facets and coils.

Lerch's exultation was rather less reserved. He thrust out eager hands and

clutched the long ropes eagerly. The girl shrank away from him with sudden fear in her eyes. I suggested immediately that we could effect the necessary transfer of the stones to the hollow saddle-frame, by daylight. He seemed to recover his self-control and swung again to the head of the procession.

The girl shrugged her slim shoulders again and the brown robe fell again into concealment of the Sirgarkh rubies. We rode on through moonlight that seemed like powdered pearls, past stark, wind-worn rocks and great dunes of coarse red sand. I fell into the rear of the little cavalcade because I held the lead-thong of the runty gray pack-mule and the little beast was slower than the other three.

Ahead rode Lerch, his great figure hunched over as if in deep meditation. Between us the girl sat stiffly erect, as if fighting off weariness and the temptation to sleep in the saddle. The *chuck-chuck* of my mule's feet in the sand and the steady swinging motion the pack-mule's gait gave to the lead-thong, lulled me into a sort of coma.

The wind wailed mournfully among the sand-worn crags and swept up ghost spirals of sand to sweep across our path like strange phantoms, waving apparition-arms in warning against our further progress. The moon dipped and dimmed and the splendor of the serrated Kuenlun range away to the eastward was blotted by the darkness that precedes the quick desert dawn.

The sun rose, the purple shadows fleeing like phantoms before the sweep of its scarlet rays. The red sands gleamed and glistened again and the mountain tops stood out limned against the dawn's broad crimson face like the mammoth tusks of some sleeping giant. I glanced at the girl ahead. Her mule plodded along wearily, every footfall marked by a bursting puff of red sand that danced for a moment in the clear air of the dawn before sinking to rest.

The brown cowl had fallen from her head and her loose red hair stirred restlessly in the breeze, and whipped about the straight slim shoulders. I rode up beside her and spoke. She didn't answer. Then I concluded that she was asleep and shook her gently.

Her body seemed as stiff and unyielding as marble. I stared into her face. Then I screamed aloud. The wide eyes that I had seen in the moonlit cave of Tan Yoi

as molten pools of glorious mystery, were suddenly a smooth even yellow tint. The beautiful countenance had lost the flush of youth and set in the severe repose that made it appear carved from aged ivory.

"Good God!" I cried. "Lerch—Lerch, wake up, man—she's —"

Lerch didn't answer. I rode up and grasped his arm—the arm that had clutched so eagerly the ropes of sacred rubies. It swung stiffly at his side. And the eyes that stared so steadily at the trail were like the eyes of Muriel McAllen and Vance Tracy! Lerch was dead.

I turned my mule off in the first break in the defile and dashed madly over the uncharted sands, the runty pack-mule running at my side. I was on foot and thirst-crazed and delirious when—four days later—I blundered into a Ninghia silk caravan. The mules had died of thirst and fatigue.



FOUR years later, in Darjiling, a Tatar camel-man told a fantastic tale about two strange mummies who sit rightly erect in Persian saddles amid the glistening bones of beasts, in a gorge near Tinghai Hai. He swore that the weird figures were like ivory and garbed in rough brown nankeen that had rotted away to reveal one of them—a glorious red-haired woman—apparaled in the most wonderful robe of uncut rubies ever seen by the eye of man. He wanted funds to go back and get it!

Every one else laughed, of course, and voted it the prize yarn of all the indoor gab-fests of the rainy season. I didn't join in the general merriment at the expense of the tall Tatar. I was thinking of a shrunken, toothless gnome-like figure, grimacing through the purple light of the sacred flame and twisting long, claw-like hands a-glitter with the poisonous red oil, potent with sinister evil. No doubt it was the sacred embalming fluid that imparted the blood-like glitter to the clicking coils of the wonderful robe.

The listless conversation in the officers' club drifted to other things, but while buying the Tatar a drink with my last twenty piasters, I was reflecting that Foy San, chemist-extraordinary to the sand-rats of the Tan Yoi caves, had avenged the theft of the Sirgarkh rubies very effectively indeed!



That Fool -Dave Hayden

by
Henry Oyen

Author of "The Stolen Cache," "The Game-Warden," etc.

OLD DARRAGH DRAKE hated Americans. He hated them with the blind smoldering hatred of the man who refuses to explain; and he swore that he would see his daughter, Margaret, dead rather than allow her to marry one of the hated breed.

Having expressed himself thus, he selected a site on the Nemakagon at a point in the Dominion twenty miles from the Alaskan line, built a tiny trading-post in an isolated clump of birches, and sent word up and down the river—

"Americans not wanted."

So Margaret was nineteen, and a woman grown, before any American was daring enough to come and tarry at her lonely home.

Dave Hayden first heard of Drake and Margaret and the old man's hatred of men from the States in the bar of Joe Petrie, on the Nemakagon, a rifle-shot inside the American line. Petrie's clientèle consisted of as careless and care-free a crowd of Americans as ever forgot what the Stars and Stripes looked like, and Hayden stood out among them as a freak always must stand out among the normal run of his fellow men.

For Dave Hayden was—a patriot!

He couldn't help it. It was in his bones. He was the tall, slow-going product of a family that had been American ever since the little muzzle-loading affair at Lexington, and which ever had wandered westward as the country about them became too populous and prosperous to suit their breed. Dave was the last of the line. Now he was within shooting distance of

the boundary marking America's last frontier, but the old idiosyncrasy still held.

His first move of note in the district had been to tack an American flag above his first location notice. The second, to teach "The Star Spangled Banner" to a large, wicked gambler who requested information as to "Where the——did you get that rag?" The fight which preceded the enforced vocal lesson required an hour of time and half an acre of ground before a decision was reached, but in the end the wicked man proved a docile pupil possessed of a fair voice of deep baritone quality.

As the gambler had won most of the cash and dust in the district, and carried his guns out of sight, Dave became instantly and greatly loved and respected. Men pointed him out to strangers. They didn't understand why he should feel so strongly about the flag.

"That fool, Dave Hayden," they would say. "But, holy red gold! You ought to see him fight!"

When Dave heard of the prejudice of old Drake he was deeply depressed.

"How can he talk that way about our country, boys?" he asked, looking around the circle in Petrie's with pained, slow eyes. "Why, think of it, there he is, not twenty miles from this land where the good old flag's flying, and there he sits cursing and r'aring at us as if we were Chinese. Why—why 'tain't right, boys; something ought to be done."

"Don't take it too serious, Dave, old hoss," was the careless response. "It's a long way to Washington, D. C., and this

old Johnny Bull's on his own soil, and he's a pretty good old sourdough except on this one point."

"But that point jest nacherly ought to be blasted off of him. Boys, it's wrong to let as good a man as you say he is to live, die and have his beans under such a handicap of ignorance. Soon's I get my new sluice in I'll jest shove up there my black self and enlighten him about the truth."

"Leave him alone, Dave; he's satisfied in his ig'nrance."

"Did you say he was alone, boys? I thought——"

Dave stopped at the snigger that greeted his words.

"Oh, ho! So that's the ideer, eh, Davy? Well, in that case there's some excuse for your insanity. Give Miss Mar—here, you dumb patriot! Put up that cannon. You sure do take things too serious."

Dave Hayden slowly caressed a six-shooter of a size that only one of his length of limb could carry on the hip without interfering with his knee action.

"There didn't anybody happen to mention any young lady's name, did they?" he drawled.

"Nary name, Dave; not a whisper."

"There didn't none of you even happen to think about any young lady's name, did they?"

"Not a think, Davey; we ain't got no brains, anyhow."

Dave slid the behemoth of six-guns back in its holster.

"It ain't right, you know," said he diffidently, "talking about young ladies in a hell-hole like this. Joe, another round of hooch for the boys and I've got to get back at that sluice."

The sluice was done in a few days, and without bidding any one good-by "that fool, Dave Hayden" pushed up the river into the Dominion toward the lonely cabin in the clump of birches.

II



THAT evening he drove his canoe ashore at the Drake landing, and Drake had watched him for several minutes, squatting on his heels and smoking contentedly. A lean, grim, wiry patriarch was Darragh Drake, and his hard gray eyes underneath shaggy white brows, took into themselves a gleam of

admiration at the manner in which the newcomer, shrewdly selecting the slowest current, came poling his way up through the last stretch of white water.

"Welcome," he called as Dave's final thrust lifted the canoe with no scraping well up on the beach. "Blow me if you don't pole well. 'Darragh Drake,' says I, 'there's a man you can welcome. He uses the pole too well to be an American.'"

Dave Hayden stepped out slowly, and turned his canoe over to empty the water which had come aboard in the rapids. He fastened his painter securely to a fir root, stowed his paddle and pole for the night and turned upon Drake.

"You reckon I did, did you?" said he; and at the first notes of the unmistakable twang the old man was up and snarling.

"You —— sneaking American! Just like one of you: appearing under false pretenses. Get off my landing; get off quick!"

Slowly and leisurely Hayden let himself down upon his heels, the posture of a man who has come to stay.

"Stranger," said he solemnly, "that's an awful sharp way for one human being to greet another."

"'Human' my eye! You're American. Get off my landing."

Dave selected two pebbles from the sand and tossed them from one hand to the other until the explosion had vented itself.

"Stranger, how come that you got such a grouch against God's country?"

Darragh Drake's eyes narrowed till they resembled two tiny slits of wicked steel in his frost-burned countenance.

"Tell me," continued his visitor. "I've come to try and bring light to your prejudiced soul."

"Oh, you have, have you?"

"Yes, I have!"

Like the leap of a cougar Dave hurled himself at the old man, barely catching in time the revolver which Drake had been slyly loosening in its holster. The weapon went flying up the bank and the sand of the beach creaked beneath the sudden combat. Old Drake's bones and muscles were still full of vigor, his rage was explosive, and he was fighting on his own soil. With a Cornish tripping trick he dropped his opponent on the sand.

"Good!" said Dave, and enfolding the old man in a bear's-hug he threw him for a fall.

"Tell me," said he, sitting astride his victim, "what set you so hard against Americans?"

"Lemme up," growled Drake.

"Will you tell if I do?"

Drake nodded, and Dave solicitously assisted him to a sitting position.

"But I never did consider a promise to an American worth keeping."

"Stranger," said Dave, "you don't look like one who'd go back on his promise to a man."

"Nothing said about a 'man'; I said 'American.'"

Sorrowfully, but suddenly, Dave laid the trader again on the sand.

"You tell me," he said, with a new note in his voice. "I've shoved twenty miles upstream to convert you and when I hit a trail I nacherly see it to the end. You tell me why your mind's wrong on Americans, stranger, or me 'n' you are going to fall out."

A peal of laughter, quickly suppressed, made him look toward the cabin. A moment later he was springing up, all hands, feet and confusion, for Margaret Drake was standing in the cabin door, she holding one hand over her mouth, and her young eyes were a-dance with the light of mischief. Dave looked and was lost.

"Oh, pop! To let an American put you on your back!" she cried, and gave way to unrestrainable laughter.

"Girl!" thundered Drake. "How long you been there?"

"Ever since he flopped you the first time, pop."

"And you stood there and let him hold me down! What kind of a daughter are you? Why didn't you pick up the gun and pound his bally head off like a faithful child should?"

"He was only an American, pop," she retorted gleefully. "I didn't suppose you needed help to handle him."

"Get back in the shanty—get back at once!"

Margaret turned, but at that moment she caught the look in Hayden's eyes and paused.

"Well, what you waiting for?" snapped her father.

After a long while Margaret replied—

"To see if you've forgotten all your manners, pop."

"Eh?"

"It's supper-time."

Darragh Drake looked at his daughter in bewilderment.

"Child, he's an American!"

Margaret held her eyes shyly on the ground, but she persisted—

"Are we going to have it said that our cabin is the only one in the country where a hungry man is driven away at meal-time?"

Before the invocation of the wilderness' sacred law of hospitality Drake bowed his head. He was trapped. He could no more turn Hayden away than he could receive him on friendly terms. He stood staring at the sand for a while, lost in the far-away mood which grows on men who live much alone. Presently he lifted his head, his leather-like face working with emotion, his eyes fiery with the light of a fanatic.

"Come to grub—American," he said. "You want to know why I hate your kind. Well, so you shall."

III



"EAT," said Drake, as they sat down.

Dave Hayden looked about the cabin as if he had wandered into a palace of wonders. There were thin china dishes with borders of flowers on the table. Tea was served from an ancient silver teapot, and beneath a crest on the lid was engraved a large "D." There were books on a shelf on the wall, and two old prints depicting ancient, vine-covered buildings such as never would be seen in the Yukon Basin. There was also a photograph of a gentle-faced woman, and Dave, looking from it to the fresh face of Margaret, knew it to be of her mother.

David did not speak as the meal progressed. All his missionary palaver failed him. That cabin with its remnants of a better world spelled a tragedy deeper even than Drake's benighted state of mind. And—there was Margaret. True, Drake ordered her from the room the moment she had supped, but as she went she looked back at the stranger. Dave was looking at her, his serious eyes frank with the feeling she had stirred in him, and Margaret included him in her prayer before she retired for the night.

"And now," growled Drake when the pipes were lighted, "toot your horn if you

want to, American, because you'll have nothing to say when you've heard my yarn."

"Nary toot," said Dave, and waited patiently.

"Does she look," began the trader, hitching his head toward Margaret's room, "as if she belonged in the bush, growing up among squaws and half-breeds, and never a chance to live in the world like a white man's daughter? Does she look as if she'd ought to grow up in this God-forgotten hole, with a poor half-crazed trader for her only kin, and nothing ahead of her but some — miner's cabin as her future home? Does she? I ask you. No, by —, no! Well, it's one of you—one of you, lying, sneaking Americans—who's responsible."

Self-control had passed from Drake, and as he leaned over the table his body trembled with passion.

"If I'd never been fool enough to trust an American Margy'd be home now in the old country where she belongs, being taught as a lady should be taught, in a young ladies' school, with life as a white woman before her—instead of what she's got. But I was a fool, because I thought all white men were white, and I treated this one that way.

"It was two years ago last Winter, up on Police Creek. I'd staked the last good claim on the creek, and I was waiting for the Spring clean-up to fix me so I could take the girl home and give her white women for company—she who'd had no white women about her since her mother died when she was ten. I had nothing to live or work for but the girl; that was my dream, to make a lady out of her, and I was on the way to it.

"Not rich, you understand, American; just enough to do right by her. I had twenty thousand dollars' worth of dust cached under my wood-pile, and the Spring clean-up was good for five thousand more. Not much, but enough, enough for her.

"Then this American came. Collins—the old man's mouth worked feverishly—he called himself. He had a thick, foreign accent, but he was a citizen of your — country, American—he was one of you—he had his citizen papers."

Dave raised his head in protest.

"Now, stranger, foreigners—"

"They're Americans, aren't they, if they've got their bally papers? All equal, aren't they, under your old flag?"

Hayden bowed in silence.

"Collins came and fell against my shanty door, fell with his head touching the threshold, at the end of his strength. I dragged him in, and I knew what was the matter at the putty-like feel of his flesh when I touched him. Scurvy. The dents stayed in his arms for an hour where I gripped him.

"We were alone on the creek, for the rest of the boys had cleaned up and gone out without waiting for another Spring. Just the girl and myself, and on that account I'd salted away half a bushel of potatoes, in case the scurvy should visit us. Good, sound potatoes, American, with never a touch of frost on them, and I used 'em, down to the last spud, in saving your fellow citizen."

"Good man!" whispered Dave.

"Good fool! I didn't know then. The scurvy left your fellow citizen, American, and he vowed that now he only lived to repay me. He did—in his own way. I got the scurvy next. I went to pieces around the head, and I raved. And the potatoes were all gone. So the American had his chance to pay. He said he'd take my dogs and drive to Fort MacPherson and bring back potatoes and help. He went.

"I'd talked in my raving, and he knew where my cache was. He cleaned it, and the dust went with him on the sledge. He talked wicked talk to the girl—a kid of little over sixteen—but she had my gun, and he was afraid. He went, dogs, gold and all, and there was Margaret alone, and me useless with the sickness.

"Inspector Dunvegan saved us. Margy prayed day and night for somebody to come and save her old dad. The inspector was coming down with an Indian he'd taken up at the head-waters, and his dogs were trained down and fast. So they got me down to the fort before it was too late.

"I was off my chump for a matter of four months. I forgot things. I'm not clear yet on all things. I went back to the creek for my Spring clean-up. Your fellow citizen had been there before me, American. He'd heard of my condition down at the fort and he'd run up and washed me out.

"What do you say, American, do you think you can sling guff slick enough to wash that away? Do you think I'm the man to listen when an American sticks up for his kind? What?"

Dave Hayden, after a space, cleared his throat.

"Are you—are you sure he was an American, Drake?"

"Yes. He had his papers, as he called them. He was a foreigner, but he was an American. Well, why don't you start your argument, American; has the slickness all leaked out of you?"

Dave sat in a deep study.

"She don't listen right, old-timer," said he. "How comes this thing hasn't been talked about?"

"It did for me. It broke me like a kid, the sickness, the trip to the fort, and the waking up. The bones dropped out of my spine and I crawled away up here to hide, like a licked wolf. I wouldn't let the kid tell; even Dunvegan didn't get a hint of how I'd been robbed."

Hayden pondered, shaking his head.

"I can understand my black self how a gent mightn't want to bother the police with his own private business, but how come you didn't take the trail, Drake, and keep on it till you found this bad hombre and beefed him to slow music?"

"I was broken, I tell you," muttered Drake. "I—I ain't a man any more."

His eyes roamed hopelessly about the cabin, and Dave Hayden understood.

"I'll go," he said, after a long silence.

"Yep, I'll go."

He slept that night in his canoe barely out of sight of Drake's landing, and in the morning he waylaid Margaret on her way to the spring after water.

"Miss," he said briefly, "this ain't right of me, but I had to do it, and this is the only way. Your dad's sot against my kind, and so I'm going away. But I want to come back some day if I can come back right. On the other hand if you don't want me to come—if you feel like your dad about it—say so, and I'll stay away for good. What say, miss?"

Margaret said nothing, but as she filled her pail her answer was in her brimming eyes.

IV



AS IT is told along the Nemakagon, that Spring marked the beginning of the two-year spell of madness which afflicted Dave in the fulness of manhood, which drove him constantly from camp to camp, over thousands of miles of trails, and

which made him known as "that fool, Dave Hayden," from Cape Nome to Fort Yukon, and from Point Barrow to Skagway.

Upon his return from Drake's he hurriedly disposed of his claim to "Curly" Nelson directly against the latter's advice.

"You're selling like a amachoor, Dave," expostulated Curly. "I can't pay you anything like what you'd realize if you waited until some one made a strike around here."

"I've got more important things to do with my black self than lay around and get rich. Give me the dough, Curly; I've got some traveling to do."

"Did you—did you see old Johnny Bull?" queried the crowd in Petrie's when Dave's stirrup-cups were being consumed.

"I saw him."

"Did you—did you convert him?"

"Not yet," said Dave, and set out upon his long, long trail.

The first march on the trail led to Fort MacPherson, to the office of gruff, red-jacketed, bear-like Inspector Dunvegan, Royal Northwest Mounted, "And here's your good health, sir, and mine, too." Here David was glared at and forced to assist in the absorption of half a bottle of Scotch ere the veteran police officer would consent to indulge in any conversation beyond the brief, unvarying toast for which he was famous. After four toasts Dunvegan quoth solemnly:

"Oh, shall Trelawney die; oh, shall Trelawney die? Then thirty thousand Cornish boys shall know the reason why!"

"Hayden, what's amiss with ye, young-fellah-me-lad? You drink, but the liquor does not even soften the stony expression on your long countenance. What long-forgotten crime have ye come to give yourself up for?"

"Spector," said Dave, "you know Daragh Drake?"

"As crazy an old coot as ever went mad in the bush. What truck have ye had with the old man?"

"And did you ever run across a man named Collins—though probably she isn't his right name, seeing that he's got a foreign accent?"

"Your description is a fine one. Collins? Collins? Hm. Not any with a foreign accent; no."

Hayden related the story that Drake had

told him, and the inspector grew business-like at once.

"Either old Drake has gone completely off his chump, or else he's failed in his duty to the Crown by neglecting to report a crime in my district. I'll jog up and have a bit of talk with the old fool."

Dave waited patiently at the fort until Dunvegan returned.

"It's a straight yarn," was the officer's report. "There is no doubt of it. But, oh, the madness of the old fool to keep his mouth shut for two years until the trail is cold. The man will probably have gone outside by this time. We've got his description, however."

He opened his note-book.

"Theodore J. Collins, that's his name according to the paper he showed old Drake—American citizen—citizen papers taken out at Boston, in the States."

He paused with a forefinger denting the page.

"It looks queer: Collins, a native of Ireland, Drake says he saw on the paper, and the man himself spoke with a foreign accent that I judge to be Dutch by Darragh's imitation. Here's his description: about thirty years old, about five feet, eight, about two hundred pounds, big, fat face with big scars, a big belly where his waist-line ought to be, light hair and a small nose thick at the end. Queer mixtures you make into citizens in the States, eh? Do they let 'em claim Ireland as birthplace when their accent would brand them as liars?"

"I don't know," said Dave. "I can't understand her. But I'm going to find out."

"One minute," growled Dunvegan. "What about you and Drake's girl?"

"I didn't know her name had been mentioned," replied Dave coldly.

"She came running after me—to ask if it was you who'd set me on the job—you bloody, long-faced fool! Go up there and carry her off and marry her and I'll see that Darragh Drake recognizes when his girl's well off."

Dave stood up.

"I got something else to do before I think of that."

"Something more important than marrying a girl like Margaret Drake?"

Hayden raised his head slowly and looked the inspector proudly in the eyes. A great emotion swelled in his breast; pride and love

of the flag struggled for expression. A man's own happiness, his life, his welfare, his love—what were these compared to the need to wipe a blot off the sacred escutcheon! He wanted to tell Inspector Dunvegan that and more, too; he wanted to pour out his creed as an American; but being of the breed he was he did nothing of the sort. He nodded in a way that gave no hint of what was stirring within him and said quietly—

"Yep, more important than that."

And Dunvegan, professional and expert judge of men and reader of their thoughts, scratched his grizzled head in wonder long after he had gone.

Dave then took the long trail with one single object in life and the description of Collins burned into his mind. He was imbued with a sense of duty so positive that it left no room for doubt in his soul. He knew as well as any one the difficulty in finding a man who, more than probably, had quit the North for the States. Even in the Arctic North, with its vast distances, the search would be a nightmare. Dave reckoned it all up, and knew that the chances were hugely against him; but it was a job that had to be done, and upon him had fallen the duty.

In Dawson, six months after his visit to Fort MacPherson, he had his first glimmer of hope and found a clue to follow. The clue led him across Northern Alaska upon the trail of a man who certainly answered in some degree to the description of Collins, but in an Eskimo igloo he found the man, a fat, grinning little Swedish trader, and one glance told Dave his long journey had been in vain.

Then rumors of a man who might be Collins, and who after a long spell of poverty suddenly had appeared with funds sufficient to purchase a prosperous saloon and dance-hall, next drew him down to Nome. But this man proved red-haired instead of blond, there were no scars on his face, and the hook of his great nose testified eloquently to the truth of his assertion that he was a Russian Jew. Wherefore Dave knew he never would have braved the hardships of the trail to Police Creek.

Next a purser on one of the San Francisco-Nome boats fell under suspicion, via rumor, and Hayden waited patiently at Nome until the boat appeared, to be greeted by a sad, pudgy, young Dane who proved

from the Old Testament that man born of woman was doomed to hell-fire unless he allowed himself to be "saved," and prayed for Dave when the latter turned away in disappointment.

Rumor after rumor Dave followed on his self-appointed quest and man after man he sought out and looked at in the hope that he would prove to be Collins, and at the end of a year and a half of it he once more met Inspector Dunvegan, and the inspector looked at him and swore.

"I was up on the Nemakagon a while back," said the officer, and swore again as he noted how Hayden trembled. "I saw another person up there with the same hollow eyes and thin face that you're carrying, but she's a girl and can't help it. Quit it, ye fool; you're killing yourself, which doesn't matter, but you're killing the girl, too, and that's something you've no right to do."

"You've heard nothing of him, 'Spector?"

"Not a thing, but——"

"I ain't ready to quit till I hear."

And finally he heard.

In Skagway he heard of Collins.

"Teddy Collins?" said a friendly bartender with a long memory. "Why, sure, there was a guy here by that name, though I never heard that his front name was Theodore. Lessee. Yep; I recollect him. Worked for the Northern Transportation in the warehouse. Go over and see them."

At the N. T. Co. warehouse they remembered Collins well.

"He left three or four years back to join in that fool rush to Police Creek. Never did see or hear of him again. His trunk's still here."

"Was he," queried Dave steadily, "about thirty—five feet, eight, weigh about two hundred pounds, with big scars on his face, light hair, small, potato nose, a big bay window, and talked with a foreign accent that might be Dutch?"

"Collins? Teddy Collins? What are you talking about! Collins was a dried-up little Irishman, all red hair and freckles, with a brogue that showed he'd never left Ireland till he was grown up. A bay window. No, stranger; you've got hold of the wrong man."

"He had citizen papers, taken out in Boston?"

"So he did. How'd you know that?"

"And he never came back from the Police Creek rush?"

"Nope. Must have croaked up there. But he ain't your man, stranger; not even a Chinaman would accuse Ted Collins of being Dutch."

Hayden turned his face back toward the north. It is a long way from Skagway to Fort Yukon, and from Yukon to Police Creek the trails were old and forgotten.

It was Winter when he reached Fort Yukon, but he would not stop. He purchased dogs and provisions, engaged a half-breed as driver, and went on his way. At the creek he found only a pair of old sourdoughs who, broken and beaten, had turned squawmen and given themselves up to the wilderness. But they had been in the rush and remembered Collins. They even knew of him then.

"He's down in Arctic City running the Husky Dog saloon."

And the description which they gave of him resembled—not the one of the Collins who had worked for the N. T. Co. at Skagway—but the Collins who had so basely robbed Darragh Drake. And as Dave turned his dogs in the direction of Arctic City he breathed a sigh of relief. For at last he was beginning to understand.

There was no man by the name of Collins in Arctic City, which was what Dave had expected, but after a full minute's scrutiny of the proprietor of the Husky Dog, who now called himself Nelson, he turned away and drove like a man beset, for the telegraph wire at Fort Yukon.

A month later Inspector Dunvegan, closely followed by Hayden, came marching into the Husky Dog; and at the sight of its owner the inspector stopped dead.

"Strumer!" he roared, and the man behind the bar grew ill. "Wanted for the murder of Belle Graves in Vancouver! And you've been in my district for years and I never suspected! So that's why you killed Teddy Collins and stole his papers—stop it!"

The bellow of Dave Hayden's huge revolver blotted out the snap of an automatic and the crash of splintered glass.

"Neat and not wasteful," was Dunvegan's comment as he examined the hole in the Austrian's shoulder. "Get up, Strumer; we're going to use you before you're hung."

V

 THE ice goes out late in the Nema-kagon. For weeks after the swift current has opened a channel of black water in the middle of the stream, the ice clings stubbornly to the banks. It is no place for canoeing, the Nema-kagon, in those days, for great floes break off suddenly and swirl out into the current, upsetting or grinding any light craft in its way; yet this Spring as soon as the black water opened there came down the river a canoe bearing three men. One, tall, gaunt and eager, kneeled in the bows fending off ice with a long pole, a second sat plying a paddle in the stern; the third lay handcuffed and chained to the brace in the middle.

"It's not done, this risking a prisoner's life before he's properly hung," protested Inspector Dunvegan. "I'm not doing my duty at all."

"My —, man!" muttered Dave Hayden hoarsely, "paddle; don't talk. There's Drake's shanty now on the bend."

He poled a way frenziedly through the ice to Drake's landing and sprang out and up the bank and to the cabin door.

Margaret opened the door. She caught hold of the jamb at the sight of him, and Dave held out his arms, and she came to him.

"I've been a long time," he whispered, "but I got a right to come now."

"A right! You mucker!"

Darragh Drake was before them, weaponed and ready, as dangerous as a mad-dened old wolf.

"Stand from him, girl; give me a shot at him."

"You put that old gun in your pocket and take a look at what's in the canoe," retorted Dave. "Hold on; I'll hold the gun my black self." He wrenched the weapon from the old man's hands. "Now take a look."

Drake looked. He walked toward the canoe with his old hands working like claws.

"Collins!" The word barely came through his parched lips. "Collins!"

"Not Collins at all!" cried Dave triumphantly. "His name's Strumer. He's an Austrian; he's a perfessional crook, hiding out. He beefed a man named Collins and stole those citizen papers to cover up his tracks, old-timer." He smote Darragh Drake recklessly on the back. "He never was, and now he never will be an American. So you take back all that stuff you said about my country. There's a song I know, old-timer, and I'm going to learn it to you after you've got used to my black self as little Margaret's husband. She's quite a song, too, if you understand. She goes like this:

"She's the Star Spangled Banner, oh, long may
she wave,
O'er the land of the free-ee, and the ho-ome of
the brave!"

HERE'S TO YOU, CANOE!

BY RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER

I'VE been on all sorts of craft
From boats like that of Tom Sawyer—
Not a patch on my own first raft—
To dreadnought, cruiser, destroyer;
But none so trim or so true as you, my canoe!

I've seen ships answer the helm
Like lightning when handled slickly;
But in all of the riverman's realm
Does any which answers more quickly,
With surer response a twist of the wrist, exist?



Red Acadia

by

J.U.Giesy

A FOUR-PART STORY

Part II

Author of "The Signal Fire," "The Return," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

I CALL myself Ashur Wolf. I was two years old when my foster-father, Sheshequins, a Delaware Leni Lenape warrior of the Monsey—Wolf—totem brought me back from a border fray, in which my parents had been killed, and adopted me in place of a still-born child his wife had borne. Thus I was carried across the Ohio River and became one of the "lost children" in the Northwest Territory.

Sheshequins took me to Mowaequa his wife and Nashoba—Gray Wolf—his first-born. I was adopted into the tribe by the blood-rite and became an Indian in all save birth. My boyhood I look back to with naught but pleasure. When I killed my first buffalo I received my final name—Waopduksit, or the White Wolf.

Now to our tribe had come two Moravian preachers, Zeisberger and Heckwelder, with their converts, who taught Christianity and peace. Our tribe soon became divided into two camps—one of peace, the other war.

The final break came in 1775 when our chiefs Glickhican and White Eyes refused to take the war-path against the Americans or Long Knives as they were called. Unable to overcome the peace sentiment, Captain Pipe led the war party out of our village of Goschocking and established a town of his own. Sheshequins joined with Pipe.

But the majority of the tribe remained behind and the influence of the Moravians spread. So while the Revolution raged around them our people took no part in it. The British governor tried vainly to overcome this peace influence, but the Moravians always converted the leaders of expeditions sent against them.

In 1778 there arrived in our country three men who had been held prisoners by the Americans at Pittsburg. They were McKee, Elliott and Simon Girty—filled with hatred for the Americans and sworn to revenge. McKee was appointed agent and manager of our district by the British governor, and Captain Pipe took him into his councils.

Meanwhile the Moravian settlements on the Tuscarawas were looked on with distrust by both English and Americans, each believing them allies of the other.

Finally, in 1781, Major de Puyster, commander at

Detroit, determined to rid himself of the Moravians and authorized McKee to attend to it. The three whites called at our village and invited Captain Pipe and his party to visit Pomoacan, the Wyandot chief, to discuss the matter. Pipe agreed and Sheshequins, Nashoba and I were members of the party.

Pomoacan was a friend of the Moravian converts and would not injure them, but Elliott, who assumed the lead, promised that they were only to be removed to protect them from the Americans who distrusted them. To this Pomoacan finally agreed and the council broke up. We returned to our village.

On the tenth of August our party, composed of about two hundred warriors—Pipe's men, Wyandots, Ottawas and Shawnees—arrived at the Moravian town of Salem on the Tuscarawas. I can still recall the peaceful settlement as it lay that evening—and the feeling of regret at our purpose which came over me.

Elliott and his chiefs called Heckwelder and his National Assistants together, stated his purpose, and arranged for a conference the next day at Gnadenhütten, six miles up the river. The next day we entered Gnadenhütten, and the conference began in the Long House.

While Nashoba and I walked through the town we came to a house from which singing floated. The house was a school filled with children, but my eyes saw nothing but the woman with red-brown hair who sat at the farther end. She advanced, spoke to us and invited us to stay while another song was sung. As we left after the song, Nashoba eyed me and said—

"At last you have looked upon a woman, my brother."

I gave him but a glance in reply.

That afternoon I spent in the forest, thinking over the woman. As I returned to town, I came upon the woman of my thoughts looking down upon our camp.

For some time we talked and I learned that she was of the Mohicans, Macksithanes by name.

"The stream of the bear's path," I smiled. "That white maid, is where you were found." My heart

was beating against my ribs—here was another of the “lost children” like myself.

Then she spoke of her people and likened them to the Man on the Cross.

“Who was that Man?” I asked.

For answer she invited me to their church that night.

Meanwhile the council had been in trouble, for

Elliott had thrown off his mask and demanded that the converts be removed and their teachers taken from them. Glickhican opposed this and Pomoacan the Wyandot, agreed with him.

That evening we all attended the church—our men and the Moravian converts. But in all that throng a face leaped out before my eyes—the face of the woman.

CHAPTER V

ZEISBERGER rose. One of the National Assistants stood and began beating time with a rattle. The congregation sang a song in the Delaware tongue, since like the Bible the Moravian songs had been translated for them by the teachers.

Then as the last plaintive minor which always characterized our Indian music so greatly, died away, Zeisberger spoke and I learned what held these people to their creed. He drew before our mental eyes the picture of that agony on the cross—the bravery of it—the deliberate purpose of it—the torture of the flesh while the spirit still stood strong—the torture of the stake—in a different form, with all its splendid stoicism to appeal to the Indian heart—not for himself—but for his fellow-man.

I felt myself strangely affected by the picture—a physical quiver of that bravely splendid death run through my arms and limbs. I glanced at Nashoba and found him arms crossed, lips set, his nostrils swollen, his eyes on fire.

He sensed my gaze and turned.

“He was a man. He knew how to die,” he whispered. “He was no bear to whimper at the hunter’s shaft.”

Then I knew dimly at least wherein the teachers had gained their wonderful hold on their listeners’ hearts. They preached what each could understand—what they had been taught to understand and admire from their mothers’ breasts, stoicism, stern strength, pain suffered by volition, without a murmur, that others might learn to be strong. Though I had never heard it before, I sensed even then that it was the terrible strength of the Man on the Cross which won the desire of the converts to emulate His teachings in their lives, made them feel that His commands must be the final word by which they should seek to do as He had done.

Hence should your brother harm you

in his blindness, the act became no longer one for retaliation, but for compassion, since truly in his ignorance, he knew not what he did. Wonderful thing to seek to carry to a red man’s heart, such a thing as only a divine fanaticism of strength would attempt, magnificent endeavor of two unselfish spirits, even though in the major sense, it was even then destined to fail.

Of course I did not think it all out then. But I felt oddly shaken, oddly exalted and lifted out of myself as I had never felt before, as Zeisberger came to a close and Heckwelder rose.

In its way his speech was as wonderful a thing as that Zeisberger had made. It was a wonderful example of patience and moderation for a man confronted by the situation which faced him now wherein he must have known in how large a part personal hatred was behind the step proposed. Threatened with banishment, with the destruction of all to which he had given the years of his life, he could still counsel mildness, submission and still unfaltering faith, in those to whom he spoke.

He asked them not to let their hearts grow weak, to remember that like themselves the Divine Man had been misunderstood in asking only for peace from the hand of each man He met. He asked them to remember that they themselves had abandoned their town of Lichtenau because it was too close to the war-path of the tribes. He told them there was truth in the words spoken in council that day concerning their being in danger. He promised to think and pray for guidance in what they should do, and that their welfare should be taken care of in council insofar as he and Glickhican and the National Assistants might find it possible.

He asked them to remember that they had been removed from a settlement before and had gained strength after the removal. And he called upon them not to let bitterness creep into their hearts against those who had come under orders of the father

at Detroit; to remember that they were their brothers, many of them from the same tribe as themselves to whom they must show their strength; that in following their teachers they had grown no less men, but rather strong enough to meet whatever came upon them, with spirits unbroken by fate.

Zeisberger rose again at the end and said a prayer, asking their God to guide him and his people in the thing which faced them now.

"He talks to his Great Spirit," Nashoba muttered beside me.

I nodded. It was as strange to me as him, yet I sensed that he was right.

The congregation sang again and the meeting broke up. At once there was a mass of the converts pressing about both teachers. Nashoba and I rose.

"Come," said he. "Our father is yonder by the door."

I glanced to where Sheshequins stood with Captain Pipe and Elliott, the latter with a sneering smile of contempt on his curling lips. And I shook my head. I was searching again for the face of the maiden I had seen before the speaking started. Now I found her, and, Nashoba noting the direction of my eyes, turned away with a little grunt in his throat.

To that I gave no attention however, because once more I knew she had seen me, since she lifted a hand and signed me to approach. I began pressing toward her as quickly as I could.

She met me frankly, smiling into my face.

"What think you now of the words of the teachers, White Wolf?" she inquired.

"He who is the elder, speaks with the words of a wise man or one who sees visions," I replied.

To my surprise she laid a hand on my arm.

"Come. I have mentioned the fact of your presence to Brother Heckwelder. He wishes to meet you," she said.

I went like one led by a string, as she led me into the group about both men, and we waited our chance to speak. There was no formality between the whites and their converts. They lived on the broad plane of a mutual interest in their daily lives. Their teachings led them and advised, but no more. I noted naught but a feeling of trust in the faces of those who addressed them that night.

Then Macksithannes spoke to the leaders and mentioned my name. I gave my hand to each and found myself looking into Heckwelder's eyes. They were deep, clear, steady—the eyes of a man.

"You are welcome, White Wolf," he greeted me slowly. "Are you not in truth white, my son?"

"Aye, my father," I gave him answer, using that term of respect almost beyond my conscious will.

"Our sister Metta mentioned you to me," he went on. "You are Delaware?"

"Aye. Of the family of Sheshequins of the Wolf clan, under Captain Pipe."

"Ah!" he said, and appeared to weigh some question in his mind. "My son will you come to my house yet this night? I would have further speech with you."

"Aye. I will come," I assented somewhat surprised by the request.

He turned from me to the maid.

"Will you show our brother the way, my daughter," he said to her smiling. "I stop here, at Brother Zeisberger's house."

"Aye," she made answer, and once more touched my arm.

We moved down the room toward the little group to which Nashoba had called my attention near the door. They stood there still, Sheshequins, Nashoba, Elliott and Pipe. Needs we must pass them to gain the outside. It was then, I think, the white saw the maiden first. Certain I am that his actions were casual enough in the beginning.

But as he drew back, his eyes fell on her face. I saw something like a start of surprise sweep through him. For a moment his lids popped open and then he bent forward swiftly to peer boldly down upon her so that I well-nigh brushed against him in keeping myself at her side.



AND though I felt her quick, instinctive shrinking against me, I said nothing concerning his conduct, as we gained the outer dusk of the falling night. Nor did she at the first. Rather she turned the conversation to what the teachers had said concerning the situation by which their people were faced.

"They wish to take our teachers from us—to send us forth unled, unguided," she complained.

"But it was with no such purpose we of the Wyandots and Delawares agreed

to accept the mission to this town," I declared, and told her of the terms on which Pomoacan had consented to come.

While I spoke we came to Zeisberger's house and my companion paused. Remembering Elliott's glance I asked her where she lived, and she pointed on down the street.

"Come," I said, and started forward determined to see her safe.

Nor did she offer any objection until we stood outside her foster-parents' gate.

Then said she—

"If you of the Delawares and Wyandots do not ask it, who is it desires this thing?"

"The agent of the father at Detroit, Captain Elliott, the man who looked into your face as we left the church house," I said.

Once more it seemed to me that she drew almost imperceptibly nearer to me as we stood.

"The man with the eyes of the snake, White Wolf?"

I heard her draw in her breath, like one who steps into icy water.

I understood dimly too why she did it and I touched her for the first time. I caught her arm with my hand.

"He shall not harm you while I live, Macksithannes!" I burst out. And I think that in that moment my first real hatred of Elliott was born. "He shall not touch you, Little Stream!" And then I paused, surprised that I, an Indian in all but birth, should have so far shown my emotion. "Little Stream," I questioned, "what name did the white teacher call you this evening?"

"One that he gave me himself—a name of his own people since I am white—Metta, White Wolf."

"Metta," I repeated. "I like it. I shall call you that."

"It is my name only to them I may trust—to my friends," she said suddenly cold.

"We will be friends," I declared.

"For what reason?" she demanded.

"Because," I said quickly, "thou and I are white."

"As is also the agent of the father at Detroit who would do harm to a harmless people."

I glanced down the street. As yet Zeisberger's house was dark.

"Tell me of your life with this people, Little Stream," I replied.

She did not refuse. Oh, she could flick me as she willed, but I know now because she has told me that the day had meant much to her as to me, that the call of the blood had been voiced in her breast as in mine, and made her linger then in the soft warm dusk, as it had sent her to spy on our camp that afternoon, as she told me later herself. She turned her head toward the cabin in front of which we stood.

"I know not my real parents, White Wolf," she began. "These, my foster-parents, Big Owl and Little Duck, Mohicans, have told me what I have learned. They had me from a wandering party of Shawnees, while yet our town was back on the Beaver in the Long Knife country. And where they had found me, they did not say. I was ill and the Shawnees left me with Little Duck and went on their way."

"Little Duck and Big Owl raised me and brought me with them when our band came here to settle. That is all I know of myself, save that I have been fortunate in being taught by the teachers until now I am able to help in their work and teach the children in the school as you saw yourself today."

"What do you teach them?" I asked, since the sound of her voice was sweet in my ears, as sweet as the soft dusk, as sweet as life.

"Singing, to count, to read," she replied.

"Read? You mean to comprehend the words on the bits of talking paper?" I said, almost in chagrin to think this maid was so much better learned than me.

"Yes."

"White Wolf can not do that," I confessed. "But he can sing and play the rattle, and—" thinking of Elliott's action of a little time before, I went on—"he is a warrior—a man who is able to defend a friend with knife or hatchet, or without them, with his hands."

"I do not teach those things, White Wolf," she made answer. "We do not believe in warriors or war."

"I know," I exclaimed. "Your teachers have weakened my tribe with their teachings, divided it, made it a jest among the nations, kept the Delawares from war."

"From war?" she replied. "From killing? Do you want war, White Wolf? Do you think it right to kill the creatures God has made?"

And suddenly her words seemed to put me on the defensive, cause me to seek justification of the very thing I had always been taught as the proper code of life.

"It is right to kill an enemy," I said.

She sighed.

"Then it would be right for an enemy of my people to kill me, White Wolf."

I made no answer at once. I stood staring down at her lifted face. Her words shook me. The thought of her death, of her beautiful body stark and cold was suddenly appalling. It set me aquiver again with an unvoiced protest. Presently, however, I drew a breath so deep that it lifted my chest.

"Were it right to permit a snake to strike a little bird, or to kill the snake?" I asked.

And I know she knew what I meant, because she drew back. Even in the dusk of the night it seemed to me that her eyes went wide. I know one of her hands crept up and clutched the doeskin chemise above her heart. But when she spoke it was not in answer but in direction.

"See," she said. "There is a light in Brother Zeisberger's house. Brother Heckwelder will be waiting for you. He will question why you do not come as you said."

I had shaken her as I myself had been shaken. Her words were plainly an evasion of a situation she was unable to discuss beyond a certain point. I felt that I had regained in a sense my poise as a man and a warrior should before all men and certainly before a woman. Hence I did not demur or delay, but turned away from the gate and went without haste toward Zeisberger's house. As she had said, it was lighted. I approached the door, and tapped upon it, before I thrust it open and entered the house.



I SPENT some time thereafter in talk with those two quiet men. Heckwelder asked me of myself and I told him all I knew. I assured him that the Indians of our party had come with no harmful intent. I explained that we all felt they had weakened our tribe, however, though we did not desire to inflict any injury in return, and that neither Pomoacan or Pipe had any wish to separate them from their people when they were removed.

Heckwelder it was after that who put his final conclusion into words—

"It is strange, my son, is it not, that our trouble should have come upon us, not through your red brothers, but through the whites?"

"Aye," I agreed. "But have you not said yourself that it is because your teachings are not understood?"

For a moment he smiled at the point I had made. Just what he had intended when he asked me to come to Zeisberger's house, I have never really learned. But I think that for a moment that night, knowing me a white, and a member of the party of Pipe, he may in casting about in his mind for any least chance of averting his people's fate have hoped to in some way use me to that end. At least his next words have always supported the belief in my mind.

"That, White Wolf, is true. Yet could some influence be brought to remove this ordeal from us our hearts would be lifted up with gladness. Your father Sheshequins—"

"Is for the war trail against the border towns," I cut him short.

"Ah, yes." Heckwelder sighed.

He gave up what he may have hoped from me in that moment, I think.

"And you, my son—who though raised in his lodge are white?"

"Sheshequins has taught me in his lodge," I told him frankly. "Never until tonight have I questioned his words."

"Ah!" He stood up.

Swiftly the weary look vanished from his face, and gave place to an eager light.

"But now you ask your heart if war be right."

I frowned. His words recalled the words of the maiden I had left before her house.

"It would seem a man may be brave without fighting," I made answer at length. "That one of whom your brother spoke—"

I looked to where Zeisberger sat.

And Zeisberger turned his eyes to his companion.

"Even so the word carries its truth to the heart of them who hear it, my brother," he said gently. "Bid our brother White Wolf think on that, and come to us on other occasions while he is here."

To my mind that ended my visit. I rose. But before I left I asked a question of my own, one which had nagged all day in my breast.

"My brother," I said, "tell me of the maiden who led me to this house tonight. Is she a maid in truth?"

And once more I found myself looking into the younger man's deep eyes. They seemed to search me. A strange expression passed over his face. It were as though he asked himself some question before he answered mine.

"Aye, she is a maid, my son," he told me at length, and once more he smiled. "Did she not tell you of herself? You were some time in finding the door of my house."

I nodded.

"She told me much," I said, while my heart leaped at the assurance of his words that the girl was still a virgin. "But I did not ask her that."

"She is one of the 'single sisters,'" Heckwelder explained.

"I am in the dark," I said, since I did not understand.

"A single sister is an unwed woman who lives with us and does such to assist in the work as she may. Sister Metta teaches our school."

It was on my mind to tell him she had taught me something more than any lesson for children, but I held my tongue, both because of my nature and training and because I half-fancied he had been thinking of some such thing during that pause before he had assured me that my maid was a maid indeed—that he was thinking that we were both white—man and woman, and that meeting here as we did, in this time of stress, it were strange if we did not hear the call of the blood our parents had poured into our veins.

Well, there was no doubt that I felt it as I left the two men and made my way back to the camp, and to Sheshequins and Nashoba where they sat smoking their pipes.

There was much talk going on. Pausing for a moment here and there as I crossed the camp, I gathered that the friction at the council that day was being discussed. Already those first growlings of dissension which were to grow and flame higher and hotter before the end, had begun. Pomoacan and the Wyandots were declaring without any effort at concealment, their stand against the proposals of Elliott and Pipe.

As on that other occasion the Wyandot half-king had found himself swept off his

feet by the words of Glickhican and the other converts. He had retired to his blankets in disgust at what now showed as Elliott's open purpose to not only remove the Moravians as he had proposed, but to disrupt their entire organization as well.

Sheshequins lifted his head as I took my seat beside him, and passed me the pipe in his hands.

I took it, drew upon it twice and returned it.

"Where have you kept yourself, my son?" he inquired.

Nashoba grunted in amusement.

"Whether these praying Indians be removed or not, there is a woman among them who will ere long spread her blankets elsewhere, if White Wolf has his way. She is a teacher in these people's school, and already she has taught our brother——"

"Peace," I cut him short, none too well pleased by the strain of his words.

"Aye, peace," Sheshequins spoke. "When Welsheetmonet places that in the eyes of a maid which calls to the heart of a man, who laughs at Welsheetmonet's will?"

"Not I," said Nashoba quickly. "The maid is fair, and of our brother's blood."

Sheshequins flung up his head.

"Tell me, my son," he bade me, and drew again on his pipe.

Wherefore I told them both all that had occurred.

And they heard me out.

"Is it well for one of our party to hold talk with a teacher of theirs?" Sheshequins asked at the end.

"It is well for a man to listen to somewhat save the hissing of a forked tongue," I replied.

"Aye," the Gray Wolf declared. "Why should we bother these peaceful people at the order of Elliott's king. Since when has his king been our father? Were we not heretofore children of the king of the French, we Delawares. And now the French king fights by the side of the Long Knives while we listen to this other at Elliott's wish."

"That is true," Sheshequins admitted slowly. "Chief Pipe himself sees no reason for Elliott's wish concerning their teachers. It is not well to drive a people forth without their leaders in the Winter. Yet will he yield to the white agent's desire, that he may rid our tribe of these folk."

"Didst hear the council of their teachers tonight?" Nashoba resumed.

"Aye."

Sheshequins' answer was a rumble in his throat.

Nashoba wrapped his robe about him.

"I am of the opinion we are being used to do a great wrong against men of our own blood," he declared, as he stretched himself out for the night.

CHAPTER VI



BUT if Elliott thought that first day he could carry all before him, he was mistaken. There were to be days of speech and argument and gradually growing feeling and friction, before he was to accomplish his purpose even in part.

Pomoacan showed up the next morning in company with no less a person than Glickhican himself. For Elliott and his wishes that was a bad proposition to say the least. It was the Delaware who had gained the favor of the Wyandot years before for these same convert settlements as I have said, and it was not unlikely that he could still sway him far toward some concession in the present affair.

I know Elliott felt the antagonistic atmosphere which marked the gathering of the council that day. He entered the Long House alone and with a frown of dark displeasure mantling his face.

I saw the whole thing myself. Nashoba's remarks of the evening before had remained with me through the night. On this second day I made one of the groups which clustered thick at the windows of the council hall and watched and listened to what went on inside. Nashoba was with me, standing close pressed to my side.

Glickhican himself opened the council that day. He rose and stood studying the faces about him for fully a minute before he began to speak. There was a quiet dignity about the man, I have never seen excelled by either red or white. One felt that within himself he held under perfect control a wonderful power and force, that he was a man who was what he was from deliberate choice, who knew that one word from him would bring back to his side those men of his tribe who had once sprung to do his slightest bidding, and that he fully sensed the material power which was his

and forebore to use it, since it was no longer in accord with that creed by which he now measured his life.

For a long minute he stood and then began his plea for those things in which he now believed, to which he had sacrificed all that temporal power which had once been his:

"We have listened to the words of our brothers and to those of the father at Detroit. We have weighed those words in our hearts through a night which is gone, and we are come to speak those things which to us seem good, that they may penetrate the hearts of our brothers, and draw us into a more common action in those things which are to be. We are told that the father at Detroit has been led to think of us as spies of the Long Knives, preparing the country for their coming in order to take the lands.

"We answer: why if this be true have they not come ere this—why is the boundary of their lands still along the Ohio, where it has been for so many years? We reply that we have not been unloyal to the father at Detroit, or to his father, in that we have kept the peace in our own lands, and refused to be covered by the black cloud which has spread between the Long Knives and that people who are his.

"We reply that we have fed his parties on the war-path when they came, and assisted his sick and wounded at all times, and in no way hindered his plans save that we have remained at peace and not sent our men to be killed or to kill, since we no longer believe in slaying those creatures God has made in the same shape as Himself.

"Now we are told we must forsake our houses and remove from our lands; that the Long Knives are not our friends; that we are in danger from them. Why, we ask, if we are their spies, should they hate us, be against us? Why, we ask, since we have done no harm to them, nor led parties of war against them, should they be angry with us?

"Also we ask if the father at Detroit believes us to be spies of the Long Knives, yet knows that they hate us, should he wish us removed? Why should he not rather let us remain until the Long Knives come and destroy us, and thereby remove us from his path beyond any chance of return? We ask our brothers to open their

hearts and listen to our words, and answer them from the heart and not from the lips alone.

"You have come to us with this word from the father at a time when our crops are ripening in the fields, yet before they are fully ripened or fit to gather. You ask us to go away and leave these which are for our food in the Winter to come, ungathered, yet at such a time that we may not plant other crops to feed us in their stead, before the chill winds shall be upon us, and the earth shall wrap herself in her robes of snow.

"You ask us to take our women and our children and go we know not whither at a time when to do what you ask, means that we must sit with empty bellies and listen to the weeping of our women and the cries of our children, because that they are hungry, too.

"Is this, we ask you, the act of a loving compassion? Is this an act inspired by a desire for our welfare? Does one send a friend hungry from his house to journey in the cold? Is it the way we have treated the war parties of the father in the past?

"Again, you ask us to give up our teachers. We ask you for a reason. Why should we give up those who have done no harm, but have kept us merely from doing harm, so that our paths lie open to all tribes and our women are happy and not weeping for those who are slain, and the fires of our houses rise straight up, rather than drift before the blast of a black cloud?

"Wherefore we say to you this: permit us to remain in this place until our crops are gathered and our Winter's food assured; permit us to take with us our teachers whom we love, and then will we follow whither you shall lead and build us new houses in whatsoever spot you select as the one where we shall spread our blankets. In the space of two moons we shall stand ready to go where the white father asks."

"Good words," Nashoba grunted in my ear as Glickhican sat down.

I nodded. The speech had impressed me in similar fashion in its simple strength. In fact it had been so simple, so sensible, so direct, so plainly an appeal to reason, that I could not comprehend how any one hearing could fail to be impressed. And I noted Pomoacan nod his head in accord with several of his subchiefs. Also it seemed to me that Sheshequin's face, which

I could see from my window, showed the strong effect of the words.

Not so Captain Elliott. He was not there to be impressed by any appeal to reason or mercy, or for any purpose save one of his own selfish spite. As Glickhican settled himself in his place in the midst of an impressive silence, Elliott gained his feet. His face still wore the scowl it had carried when he entered the council, and his voice rasped in the sound of a sneer.

"Who is it begs for delay when the father at Detroit commands? Him to whom we have listened, says with one breath he is loyal to the father, and with the next that he has not sought to put stones in the paths of his plans, and with a third he questions the father's reasons, his purposes in the action he desires, and raises up objections to those things he has instructed me his agent, to see done. Did he when a child, question that which his father told him to do? Or did he trust to his father's judgment in all things and obey?

"The white father is to his red children as the red father to his child. His welfare is theirs. He thinks of and for them. It is for them to hearken to his voice when he speaks, not to ask why he commands. He is rich. What thinks he of a few ears of corn? What to him are a few grindings of meal? The brother who has spoken would make it appear that he will leave his children to starve in the place to which they are to be removed. Has he any reason for so thinking, save in his own heart?

"The brother asks why the teachers should not be allowed to go with them when they are removed. I shall answer: because it is these white men who have brought all their troubles upon the red brothers from the first. It is because in hearkening to their voices the red brothers have closed their ears to the father's voice; because the father is displeased that they do not hear him when he speaks and desires them to be once more his children who give ear to what he says. Hence he desires to have his children where they can hear him and not some other tongue, which says other things than those things he desires.

"He has asked why the Long Knives are still beyond the Ohio. I answer that it is not because of anything he or his teachers have done, but because of the things done

by the other loyal children of the father, who have hearkened to his voice, while the Delawares remained as timid children hiding among the trees, as the youths and the men go forth to the fight. It is because others have fought while the Delawares have performed the tasks of women and become as women in all things save their words, which still are full of sound.

"And it is these teachers who have made the Delawares the jest of all nations, where once they were strong. Therefore the father has declared that the teachers must be sent away, that the Delawares may once more open their ears to the men's words he shall say."

Once more Nashoba grunted, flexing an arm.

"Were he not the father's agent I should show him if I were a woman or a man. His tongue is an untrained colt. He should bridle it lest it throw him to his hurt one of these days."

But before I could answer his indignation, Pipe was on his feet. I shall not record his speech. In it he sided with Elliott. He declared that the settlements should be abandoned at once, that the teachers should be banished as enemies of the white father's plans and a danger to the tribe which they had weakened.

He turned upon Glickhican, his enemy of years in so far as policy went, and berated him in a fashion I feel sure he would never have dared had he lacked Elliott's support. He taunted him with his lost prestige as a warrior, called him a mumbling woman, held him up as one who had aided in the downfall of his tribe, derided him as one whose heart had turned to water, as a coward who feared to face an enemy as a man.



TO SUCH a speech there were but two replies—silence or death. At the end, while my heart throbbed with anticipation of what might happen, Glickhican rose without a word, and without so much as a glance in Pipe's direction, folded his robe about him and stalked from the house. More than that, he left Gnadenhütten the same day and went back to Salem, from which he did not return until brought back weeks later by Pipe's orders, a prisoner to all purposes and intents.

Pipe regarded his going in somber fashion, but Elliott laughed.

"One of their teachers is driven out already," his voice rolled forth in a taunt. "Words alone are enough to work the confusion of Glickhican the once mighty chief."

A murmur ran through the Long House, and was echoed by those of the town and the several parties outside. Nor was it a murmur of approval. It was more like the growl of a rising anger. Glickhican had been respected and loved. The white man had first insulted our tribe and was now holding up to ridicule one whose name had always been a thing of honor. It did not sink well into our hearts.

Pomoacan rose.

"We are met to talk in council as men, not to point fingers at one another like children," he declared in a heavy tone of disgust. "Those words Glickhican has spoken are good words. They have entered my heart."

Again Pipe sprang up.

"And thy words are good words also, for one who came for the very purpose set forth in the father's commands," he made sarcastic response.

Pomoacan regarded him still standing.

"I came to remove my fathers to a safe place with their women and children, not to spread starvation and disrupt their family," he rejoined.

Once more a murmur ran through the body of his subchiefs gathered in his part of the room.

Elliott rose. The man's face was fairly purple with rage.

"You came to do the father's bidding in whatever way he desired," he roared. "Now you appear like the smoke which wavers this way and that before a wind. Can Pomoacan not think for himself, that he listens to every whispering breeze?"

"Aye. Pomoacan thinks—for himself."

Like Glickhican before him the Wyandot folded his robe, signed to his men and led them from the council in an unbroken group.

Nashoba beside me, clucked in his throat.

"There will be yet much talk before this is finished," he opined.

I nodded again and turned my eyes once more into the room. Heckwelder had risen and was speaking to Elliott himself, now that all formal course of the council had been broken up. It seemed to me that he was making some passionate appeal to the British agent. He spoke as a

man speaks who is pleading for all he holds dear, though I could not hear what he said. His face was drawn however, and tense with emotion. I watched the two men for as much as five minutes, and then Elliott laughed in a brutal fashion, turned on his heel and went over to speak with Pipe.

These things I have told that the reader may comprehend how strife and a division of opinion crept early into the council, and how Elliott's wish to force instant removal and to banish the teachers, were the real cause of what followed, even as his hatred and that of Girty and McKee was behind the entire sorry task to which we men of the tribes had been sent.

Pomoacan left the council and went back to our camp with his men. Once there they met in a council of their own and decided upon their own stand in the affair. To them the request for time to gather the crops seemed reasonable by all the standards of such economy as they possessed. The desire to take their teachers with them, seemed natural enough on the Moravians' part.

Tribal ties and those of family were the strongest bonds in an Indian's life. Elliott in his demands was striking at the very fundamentals of their lives. They could comprehend fully the emotions waked in the Moravians' hearts by his words. They argued that they had come on a friendly mission to procure not the injury, but the safety of these people. And they declared for an adherence to that part of the plan.

But they had not fully tasted as yet, the power Elliott was prepared to wield in order to gain his point. That came only later after weeks of angry wrangling had passed. Even then though they did not know it, reinforcements for the Englishman's party if I may call them such were approaching. They with the man himself and Pipe's support eventually won his demands in some extent.

As for myself I felt disgusted with the whole affair as I turned away from the window and gave my attention to the Moravians who had witnessed it all and were now discussing the turn in their affairs in serious little groups.

They departed slowly, speaking as they went. There was no excitement. One of the remarkable things about the whole dreadful business was the contained, the controlled attitude of those people from

first to last. Especially is this true in view of the fact that most of them had been tribesmen, trained to a wholly different standard of life within a few years. If anything had been needed to verify the truth of their convictions, the strength of the words of their teachers, I think this one thing might have been it.

The whole affair was the red man's Acadia, though their agony has not been sung as has that other removal of a peaceful, harmless people from their homes and their scattering abroad. Yet both were performed by white men without any consideration for the human welfare of the people they involved. And that the Moravians suffered an agony unvoiced, I, who lived through those days and saw it, know.

And I saw Macksithannes again that afternoon. As the others streamed from the disrupted council, I walked down the street and loitered about outside the school. And at length she came out with the children clustering about her.

Then I stood up and her face lighted I thought for a single instant as she saw me, and she came to meet me, and we joined hands.

"Thy duties are ended, Little Stream?" I questioned seeing the children dispersing this way and that.

"For the day," she smiled.

"Come then," I said.

"Whither?" said she.

"To the forest, where we may talk," I replied, and waited.

For a moment she stood undecided, then—

"You would tell me of your talk of last night with the teachers?" she said.

"If you desire," I replied.

"But—is the council over?" she questioned, noting the men on their way to the camp.

"The council is much as a number of tree cats which squall and mew, yet accomplish nothing," I told her glancing after Pipe and Elliott half-way to the camp. "Glickhican and the Wyandot have left it, and now our captain and the white father's agent have none to argue with."

Her eyes flashed.

"I will go with you, White Wolf," she decided. "You shall tell me all that occurred."

We turned along the street, I walking by her side. We gained the forest and entered.

We found us a place of shady comfort and seated ourselves on the pungent forest floor. We spoke of what had occurred in the council, of our people, and after a time of ourselves, and I told her my story even as she had told me hers the night before.

The day was warm, the timber spicy with the breath of its life. The sunlight filtered through the branches, filled the more open glades. Butterflies glinted in the light and shadow as they swam on painted wings. Birds chirped now and then above us. Little dancing motes quivered in the paths of the sunbeams. We sat and watched them and spoke—the woman I loved and I.

And there was nothing to disturb. It was all peace, quiet, just Nature in her own temple, working with unseen hands at the task of life. The trees were the pillars of those temple aisles, the grass its carpet, the sunbeams the light through its windows, the branches above us the groined arches, the flowers, the leaves, the trappings of that place in which we sat in a silent worship, feeling the divine fire of Nature herself steal into our breasts.

Aye, it was Nature. We were a man and a maid alone. To my eyes she was the crowning beauty of all the beauties of the day, the fairest thing in the world, a thing which filled my untaught breast with strange unrecognized longings, my mind with dreams, my soul with such aspirations as I had never known. She was to me a wonderful thing, a masterpiece on which I gazed with at times a strangled feeling in my throat, beyond all expression in words. And she was with me here in the sweet, warm world of the forest, speaking to me softly, while I lay at her feet.

What cared I for councils, for wranglings by the chiefs and elders? What cared I for anything at all, save to have her there before me, my own sweet, wonderful maid?

And after a time she began speaking to me softly—of Him who had made the trees and the grass, and the flowers, butterflies and birds and even herself and me. I lay and listened. Her voice was as the babble of a brook in my ears, and I said so after a time.

She laughed softly, giving me a glance from her lash-shaded eyes.

"And your tongue, White Wolf, is like the rattle of a stream which sings a liquid song and flows on to sing again at another place."

Once more her words aroused my spirit. I had been so sincere in my speech and my new-found feelings toward her. I drew myself erect as I sat and stared full into her face as I might have looked eye to eye at a man.

"Yet has it never sung such a song to a woman ere this," I made my answer. "Nor would it have sung it to thee, had I not known you unwed."

Her eyes fell at that, and the color came up in her cheeks. She began fingering the simple pattern of beadwork on the petticoat she wore. But she said no word.



"METTA," I said become bolder for her silence and her blushes. "Why are you still unwed?"

And then she looked up and her eyes were dancing.

"Perhaps no man has desired me," said she.

"That," I responded bluntly, "I do not believe."

"Or perhaps," she said with a flash of something like defiance, "I have never seen one I desire. One who was——"

"White," I threw in the word.

She paused. Her eyes widened and she sat staring into my face while my own heart began pounding at my boldness, who had never spoken in such a strain to any woman before.

"How did you know I was unwed?" she asked after a time.

I told her how I had learned.

"Oh," she said softly and again looked down.

All the unawakened passion and longing of healthy manhood burst into flame in my breast. My throat felt full. I was stifled just as on the day before when I had seen her in the schoolroom first.

"White you may be, yet you make love like an Indian," she said again at last.

"I have lived as an Indian," I replied. "Hence what I say I say from the heart. I use not the white man's speech of the lips alone." And suddenly I put out a hand and covered hers. "Metta, when will you come to my lodge?"

It was the symbolism for marriage in our tribe, as she knew of course, and I saw something like displeasure waken in her eyes.

"Does a maiden wed an enemy of her people or one of a tribe who would do them

harm?" she exclaimed and took her hand from mine.

I lifted my hand and folded my arms.

"You are unwed because there was none to wed you," I burst forth. "Call these people thine if you like, yet have you held back from mixing your blood with theirs."

"Aye—but in all else you are as much a savage as any of the totem of the Wolf," she began.

"And even so, Macksithannes, I am as a bear led on a thong of strong hide."

Oddly enough I thought at the time, since I knew then so little of women, her lips curled up in a smile.

"Who leads you then, big bear?" she seemed to mock.

"A Little Stream, beside whom is my path," I growled rather crossly and in a somewhat sulky humor, even though I made a play on her name in my answer.

And at my words she stood up.

"The bear may walk as he pleases, so he knows how to make his path," she said, and held out her hand.

I sprang up and caught it.

"Metta!" I exclaimed.

"But the Little Stream's path leads not on the war trail, White Wolf," she went on almost coldly again. "Visit the teachers, learn to be white in more than the matter of birth."

"You would have me leave my party?" I questioned, thinking of Sheshequins and Nashoba, Rosebud and Mowaequa and how good they had all been to me.

"Would you take me to the Delaware lodges and leave me to wait while you followed the war trail?" she asked me in turn.

And as she spoke I remembered Nashoba's words to Rosebud—concerning my yellow hair and how it would mark me out to the foemen—and the song he had sung concerning the waiting, weeping women. A strange picture flitted before my eyes of the fair maid before me, waiting weeping, while my scalp hung from the belt of some dusky warrior perhaps. Not that the loss of my scalp appalled me, but that war seemed a poor price for which to give up what I felt life with this maid might mean. So I looked down into her eyes and gave her a promise.

"I will go to your teachers then, Little Stream."

And that I think really explains in part at least what was to happen later. I mean

the part I myself played in the events. Of course I might have done it had that conversation never have occurred. But at least it made my action sure, as nothing else could have done. And all my life it has seemed to me that one thing has a way of leading to another, as though each were but a part of some inscrutable design.

Nor can I doubt it now when I look back and recall how I, White Wolf, the savage in all my years of training, came to the town of Gnadenhütten and there met the maid, who was fated to change all my life. Was it not all the part of a plan? Had not what as a white I call Fate, what as an Indian I thought of as the intent of the Great Spirit, brought me there in good time, to show me at last the woman who was fashioned for my mate? At least I know such thoughts as that filled my mind as we went back to the town, and I left her and walked toward the camp.

I found it full of life and action. At last the Shawnees and the Ottawas had arrived. Their numbers swelled our ranks to nearly three hundred men. Pipe and Sheshequins were standing amidst a group of their subchiefs as I came into the camp. Elliott too had come out of his tent to give them welcome. I am sure he was glad they were come. They, properly primed by McKee and Girty, with the war party of our tribe far more than offset the defection of Pomoacan so far as influence went.

For the Shawnees were a strong people and the Ottawas lived very close to the father at Detroit, and with the Wyandots were affiliated with the Six Nations. Pomoacan's rebellion against the course of the task he had undertaken was practically discounted thus as soon as begun. The Wyandots would need to speak strong words indeed to gain any less rigorous treatment for the Moravians now, than Elliott had planned. I sensed it myself and Nashoba coming up to join me, said as much.

"Where have you been?" he went on.

I told him without evasion. It had been our way since boys to have no secrets one from the other.

"She is as fair as a forest flower, truly," Nashoba declared when I was done. "Our cousin Elliott agrees with you in that."

"Elliott?" I said scowling and feeling my muscles stiffen at the mention of the name.

"What has the father's agent to do with her?"

Nashoba shrugged.

"You passed him last night at the door of the church house, my brother. Afterward he asked concerning the maid."

"And you told him what?" I questioned quickly, recalling the fire in the agent's face as he had looked upon her, the glance which had made her shrink close to my side.

"That she taught these people's children," he said.

CHAPTER VII



BUT despite the arrival of the Shawnee and Ottawa parties, the council dragged on for some three weeks. Pomoacan put up a wonderful fight for what he considered justice and no more. And unexpectedly more than one of the newcomers sided with him. Say what you will the red man had a strange almost mosaic type of thought by natural bent. He was not easily swayed from a preconceived stand, but if he did change his opinion he was as completely won to it, as he had formerly been convinced of the reverse. Furthermore he was one who demanded a cause to engender an act.

Elliott's one weakness was in his dogged insistence on the banishment of the teachers and the immediate removal of the towns which ran counter to all Indian tenets at the start. Had he been willing to yield in the least on those conditions, he would have had a complete support. But yield he would not. Rather he urged his wishes in a fashion more and more offensive, with a total disregard of any other opinion than his own. More and more his tone became one of a defiance of the tribal bodies to do other than what he decreed.

Against his increasingly domineering ways, Pomoacan, the National Assistants, Zeisberger, Heckwelder and some of the other subchieftains of the various tribes represented, held out with an obstinate resistance which while it listened to vituperation, villification and threat, came always back to a positive denial of what was asked.

I think perhaps the Moravians would have yielded the matter of immediate removal, trusting to a supply of provisions such as Elliott had intimated would be furnished,

had that been all required. But to the permanent dismissal of their teachers they would not hear. There can be no doubt that they loved them, and did not wish them sent away. Nor did the teachers themselves apparently see it their duty to remove themselves. The council grew into a deadlock on that one point. One can imagine how arrogant Elliott must have become indeed, when I state that even Pipe became disgusted and more or less offended at his course.

As for Sheshequins and Nashoba with whom I had daily conversations, both were sick of the whole business at the end of ten days. In fact I think we all had come to see that the thing was a matter purely of personal hatred on Elliott's part, and to doubt the truth of his reiterated assertions that he had been ordered to go to any such lengths as he proposed.

This then was the state of things, a condition where many of the warriors scowled when they saw the wind lift the flag over Elliott's tent, at the end of three weeks.

Despite the growing spirit of dissatisfaction in our camp they had been a wonderful three weeks to me. Never a day after that first, but I saw Metta, sometimes for a few moments only, sometimes for hours wherein we walked the forest glades, and learned to know each other beyond reserve. Each night I went to the meetings and listened to the teachers. More than once I spoke with Heckwelder during that time. In fact I sought him soon after that day in the forest I have just described. I opened my heart and told him I wished to learn of his teaching, and after that I went to see him now and again.

It was on one such occasion that he spoke to me of Metta and asked me frankly if I loved the girl.

With equal frankness I told him that I did.

"I think it's God's hand in this," he rejoined somewhat to my surprise. "You have both been raised by your red brothers apart, yet now you come together at a time when much trouble and sorrow are about to descend upon us. It is well she should have a protector thus raised up to shield her from possible harm, should the worst come to pass. Have you spoken the things in your heart to her, my son?"

"Aye," said I, since truly that old man seemed to me more like a father than a

stranger. "She named me a savage in all but birth."

I suppose my tone showed something of my feeling since this matter was so close to my heart, for Heckwelder smiled.

"Thy maid is a maiden of spirit, White Wolf," he said. "Yet should ye who have known her since she was an infant, be taken away from our people, I had rather make you man and wife before I depart. She is a sweet flower of the forest, and it were fitter that she wed a man of her blood. I believe she would lead you aright in the end, since because of her, as I suspect, you seek even now to learn."

Oh, he was wise with the wisdom of the gentle heart, that Moravian teacher, and I sought not to deceive him or his kind, strong eyes as I found them upon me.

"Aye," I admitted as he paused. "She told me to learn, my father. Wherefore I do not deny I have come to the meetings and to you as well."

His smile widened.

"You are a man of truth, White Wolf," he replied; "whereby you strengthen my faith in your worth. I shall speak to the maiden myself concerning these things—perhaps there will be use for her wedding dress, before this matter comes to an end."

I folded my arms and threw up my head. My heart was glad. For I an Indian knew the custom of the women, of making the dress of marriage through years, by their own hands, and laying it away until the day they went to some man's lodge to return no more to their own. And though I was no Christian in those days, I felt myself shaken more than once by the things I heard and saw in Gnadenhütten—those "Tents of Peace" as Heckwelder told me the name really meant in his tongue. And so also was Nashoba my brother shaken.

Despite ourselves we could not but admire the white teachers, their words and actions amid all the trouble and strife which were come upon them. Aye they were men—those two whites, against whom those other whites, Elliott and McKee and Girty, were plotting in a spirit of revenge.

And knowing them as I had come to know them, I say again, that perhaps I had acted as I did, even though Metta had not come into my life to change it. Yet since she had come and had sent me to the teachers to learn, and so brought me to know them better, I can not really say what action

I might have taken, or indeed if I had even learned of that step, which Elliott finding himself balked and checked in the councils, now determined to take.

Be that as it may, it was the very next morning after the conversation I have just recorded, that in passing through the camp not far from Elliott's tent, I noted something white caught in a bunch of weeds.

I stooped and picked it out from between the stalks and turned it in my hand. It was a bit of paper. That much I knew. But what interested me more was the fact that it bore lines and marks, such as once or twice before I had seen. There was writing such as the white men used, on that bit of paper. This was a bit of their talking paper, such as they used in communicating with each other, just as we used bits of bark, and knotted thongs and things of like ilk.

And the only white in this camp was Elliott, toward whom I now felt as so many of our warriors had come to feel, as one who was using us to further his own personal purpose, against our power to resist. I looked toward his tent. There had been a little wind the night before as I remembered. I fancied this bit of talking paper had been blown from the white agent's lodge to where I had come upon it but now.



GLANCING about to discover whether I were observed or not, I folded the bit of paper quickly and thrust it down inside my buckskin leggings between my breech-clout and my skin. What it meant I had no least conception then, but of one thing I was certain. Metta could read and hence could tell me what the scrawling marks upon it conveyed. I decided to take it to her and get her to tell me what it meant. That would be easy because I met her daily now when her work in the school was done.

Wherefore I went to the town, hung about the Long House during the morning hours, and strolled down the street when I saw the children running out of the school-house door.

"Come," I said when Metta came out behind them, and I suppose my eagerness to show her my find made my tones almost gruff.

Because she drew back with what seemed a pretty simulation of fear.

"It were caution to remain here when the

White Wolf growls so in his throat," she smiled.

I thrust my hand inside the band of my clothing and produced the bit of paper.

"I have somewhat to show you," I declared.

"What?"

"Come with me."

She laughed and fell into step at my side.

We left the town and gained the little place in the forest which had come in those weeks passed to seem all our own. And there I put the bit of paper into her hands.

She studied it frowning, and presently lifted her eyes.

"Where did you find this, White Wolf?" she asked.

I told her.

"What is it?" I questioned in turn.

"The names of men as it appears," said she.

"You read that on what you hold?"

"Yes."

"What men?"

She read what was written.

I looked into her eyes.

"Those are names of the Shawnee tribe," I declared. "That talking paper I found outside Elliott's tent. The Shawnees are his to give ear to his word."

"White Wolf," her voice sank almost to a whisper. "What does it mean?"

"I do not know," I said. "But see you, Little Stream, the council goes not to Elliott's liking, and the Shawnees are men who trust more in the hatchet than words. Furthermore they are McKee's people and Elliott is a captain under McKee. These then may be the names of men Elliott has selected for some purpose of his own."

"What purpose?" she questioned again.

"I do not know, yet something to do with his failure to win his point in the council," I told her with a frown since I could not see then any more of Elliott's plan.

"You have heard nothing in the camp?" my maid asked.

"Nay. This is of Elliott's planning with the Shawnees if at all," I replied. "Yet perhaps a wolf can find out the plan of a fox."

She gave me a glance which quickened my heart.

"You would do this—for my people?"

"Aye," I said, my brain already seeking the trail on which I must run.

"Or, White Wolf, do you do this for me?"

She met my glance frankly as nearly always. Remember we were Indian raised, children of Nature as it were. There was little of the white drooping of eyes about my maid of the red-brown hair, with me now, nor had been save that once or twice when first I knew her and rather rushed precipitately forward toward the first meeting of our souls.

"White Wolf does it for both you and them, Macksithannes," I said boldly. "For you because you speak to his heart new things, and love these teachers; for them because they and your people are good people, not crawling cats or creeping snakes, nor slinking foxes."

She put out a hand and covered mine with it, lying warm against my skin.

"White Wolf," she cried out; "why does this man Elliott hate my people and my teachers?"

"Because," said I, "they stand between him and his revenge. He wishes war against the Long Knife borders, and your teachers keep your people and my people from the war he desires. Yet Pomoacan bars the path for the removal of the teachers, wherefore I think perhaps Elliott plans somewhat with his own men, the Shawnees."

"They are the men who slew my own parents," said my maid.

"As for that, my people slew my parents," I returned. "That is war. Yet in all things else they have been parents to me, and I have held the cradle board of their children as a child, and loved the child strapped to it." And then I smiled. "At least the Shawnees did me a friendly act in bringing you to me."

And then the roses bloomed again in the cheeks of my maid. But she sobered almost at once.

"You will watch, White Wolf," she said swiftly and with a quickened breath. "You will have the eyes of the owl and the ears of the otter, will you not? Think, White Wolf, what would be my fate were aught to happen to our teachers, or were they banished."

I rose to my feet.

"I have thought, Little Stream," I made answer. "Whatever happens I, White Wolf, of the Leni Lenape, will be here."

And she lifted her eyes. She seemed far kinder today than ever before. There was that about her which made my heart glad.

"Brother Heckwelder has said as much to me, oh my brother of the Delawares," she replied.

"And what says Metta of the Moravians?" I questioned, bending somewhat toward her.

She sighed, and then she smiled, and her cheeks bloomed like the anemone in Spring.

"Macksithannes made her wedding dress long before her heart told her it was all white," she said softly.

I stood up and folded my arms and laughed. I knew how it must appear, that dress with its soft thin skirt, its embroidered vest, its Girdle of the Virgin to bind her just above the thighs, with its fringed and bead-tufted ends, its knee-length mocasins of softest hide, beaded and quilled from knee to toe tip.

"I have much for which to give thanks to your teachers," I declared. "For long years White Wolf has run alone among the wolf pack of his people, seeking his own white mate."

"And now?"

She rose and stood before me.

"He has seen her," I said. "And—" I drew my light war hatchet from its sheath and my knife, and held them out before her one in each hand—"these and the arms which hold them shall stand between the White Wolf's chosen mate and harm."

She came closer. Her hand fell upon the skin of my forearm and pressed it.

"It is strong," she said, and smiled.

"And the heart behind it beats strongly," I told her with a bit of the boastfulness of the Indian, the male before the woman, and of youth.

And so strange a thing is the human heart that after we had walked back to the village, and I had left her and turned toward the camp I felt almost a desire that something might actually happen wherein I could prove to her the strength of heart and arm of which I had boasted that she might know her man was a man indeed and not alone in words.



I FOUND the camp practically deserted when I arrived. Most of the men were either in the town at the council or sleeping under bushes, or walking the forest. As for myself I found hook and line and went down by the river, where squatted on the bank I dropped my lure

into the water and gave myself up to consideration of the bit of paper I had found and what it might really mean.

That the names were Shawnee I was certain. And the Shawnees would do what Elliott said. That he regarded them as his people was clearly shown by the fact that after their arrival he had so altered our camp that their party was camped about his tent, to the exclusion of all the other clans, which formed the expedition.

But think as I could I could reach no conclusion, save that the best thing I could do was to follow Metta's advice and watch and keep my ears open. Wherefore I decided to take up my watch that very night and I thought Elliott's own habits would help me in that.

He burned a candle nightly in his tent for some hours as a rule. And that very trick would enable a watcher at some distance to see whether men went to him or came away. Of course he might call them to him one by one. That would be the better way, but it was hardly Elliott's fashion. He was more or less impatient of results, particularly since we had come here.

Wherefore I decided to wait and watch this very night. If he had not called his men to him ere this I would seek to learn something at least of their appearance, and I did not think he could have gone far with whatever he had in mind for the reason that the bit of paper I had found was fresh, nearly clean, had not lain out surely one night.

So I finished my fishing after I had caught several fish, took them back to the camp and broiled them over some coals. We Indians ate when we felt hunger, not at a regular hour and I had eaten nothing since morning. Now I devoured my fish and stretched out in the late light of evening to wait for dusk before creeping to a place from where I could watch the door of Elliott's tent.

Nashoba came up while I lay there, and squatted down at my side, and I asked what progress had been made in the council during the day.

He grunted in a manner of disgust.

"The council, oh, my brother, is like to a dog which bays at the moon," he declared. "There is much of noise and no other merit, or—" he smiled thinly—"it were fit to say the council is like to a dog which stands above its vomit, since that

they chew the same words over which they have said before."

"It may be that something shall occur to change that ere long," I returned, giving him a glance out of the corner of my eye.

He stiffened slightly.

"What means the White Wolf?" he inquired, sensing more back of my words than the sound.

I told him about finding the paper and what had been written upon it, and also what I intended to do.

"I shall join with you in this," he said when I was done. "Always the Gray Wolf and the White Wolf have hunted together. Is it not true my brother?"

"It is true," I agreed. "But—this is my affair alone, oh Nashoba."

He shrugged.

"Not so," said he with glinting eyes. "Let the Gray Wolf visit the camp-fires of the Shawnees this night, while the White Wolf watches the lodge of the Shawnees' brother. Four eyes may see more than two."

I considered.

"Good words," I said after a time and gave him my hand.

The church bell began tolling while we talked, but that night I did not go to church. I thought of Metta, however, and felt she would understand. Nashoba took out his pipe and began to smoke, while I lay and watched the night come down. The food fires were going with their pleasant and pungent odor. The camp was full of life. Twilight deepened and still we waited. Dusk came down. Nashoba's pipe had gone out.

At length the fires died to little more than embers, and we rose. Nashoba moved off toward the Shawnee party, and I slipped out of the camp to make a detour and gain a point from which I could see the lighted door of Elliott's tent.

Then I went down on my belly and began edging in toward the light as years of training in the art had taught me how. It was quite dark by now, and it came to me that as Metta had said I would need the eyes of an owl or a tree cat. And at the latter thought I smiled. I paused in my creeping and crept back. I found a tree and mounted it quickly, reaching a point where I could see through its leafy branches to the tent of the British agent and crouching easily down in a crotch to wait.

Below me the camp was still awake, though the food fires were dying down till they winked more like fallen stars than anything else. But now and then I could hear the low gutturals of conversation as I sat and peered out from my porch.

Possibly an hour passed before I had any reward for my pains. Then just as I was beginning to think that I had perhaps read Elliott's intentions wrong after all, or that perhaps he had written down the names on the talking paper after his talk with the men, I stiffened into attention all at once. The fly of Elliott's tent lifted slightly. One after another three men passed through it in single file, and dropped it behind them again. They were Indians beyond any doubt, and trained as I was in such matters, I had marked their briefly-lighted faces as Shawnee.

I had been right then in my conclusions. My heart began pounding against my ribs as I slipped down from my tree and stole softly back toward the camp.

CHAPTER VIII



FOR if I was to learn what Elliott intended, the major and most difficult part of my work was yet to come. It was nothing less than to penetrate the Shawnee camp, approach Elliott's tent and endeavor to hear as well as see what was going on inside. But there fortune favored me no little. The larger part of the Shawnees as of our own people had wrapped themselves in their blankets before those three shadowy shapes had stolen to their meeting with the British agent. And the dull glow of the food-fire embers served to show me where they lay.

Once more I dropped down and crept silently forward so swiftly as I might yet pausing now and then to assure myself that as yet I had given no alarm. It was slow work, because now and then I had to make a detour about some sleep-wrapped group, and find my way between them and another, before I could go on. Still I progressed, not without some pride in my own ability to do so. And always I edged in nearer and nearer to the tent.

It sounds simple enough as I set it down, as I read it now, but to any one who so believes it, let me say only to try a similar task, and creep through a band of men

sprawled here and there in the dark, and gain a given point without rousing a single sleeper to give the alarm. Once my hand touched a moccasined foot and I shrank back, lying breathless on my belly and waiting before I went on. Once a sleeper beside whom I moved, stirred and grunted and turned in his sleep, sending me once more to earth. But in the end I came to the spot where I wanted to be and found the skin wall of Elliott's lodge against my hands.

Very softly I laid myself down beside it, pressing my face close to the earth, searching for the edge of the skin with my fingers and lifting it, gently, until at length I could see to some extent what was going on inside.

And then I saw the three Shawnees and Elliott seated within, the white on a small log in lieu of anything better, the Indians squatted before him on the floor. I was in time to see the last of the Shawnees hand back to him a pipe which quite plainly he had passed around. Thanks to the time spent in that sort of thing, I was in time also to hear him begin to speak.

"I have called you here, my brothers of the Shawnees, to speak with you in regard to a method whereby we may bring this matter in hand to a close. And I have chosen you because I know ye men of valor and true to the father at Detroit and ready to do his bidding now as in the past. My brothers, shall I speak more?"

"Speak, brother, we harken unto thy voice as to the father's," said one of the Shawnee braves.

"Thou hast listened to the talk of the council and thou hast seen how it runs ever in the same fashion from day to day," Elliott resumed. "These white teachers are the cause of all the trouble even as they have caused all the trouble concerning these praying Indians for years. Were they removed these Indians would return to the ways of their fathers, which are good ways as thou and I knowest. They would throw the hatchet into the skies, and talk not of peace until the wishes of the father had been brought to pass. Wherefore the father desires that they be removed, and their people taken to a place where they may once more learn the ways from which they have been led. All this ye know."

As one man the Shawnees nodded.

"Aye, that we know, our brother. Thy words are good words," said he who had spoken before.

"My heart is glad that the Gray Hawk approves of my speech," Elliott again went on. "But as the Gray Hawk and his brothers know, the heart of the Wyandot has been entered by the plea of these praying people that their teachers be not taken away, and the men under Pipe are as wolves who have broken teeth."

Instinctively I clenched my hands. I had grown tired of hearing our people laughed at, scorned, ridiculed thus. For a moment I felt minded to throw myself into the tent and show this white one wolf who was still ready and able to bite. But caution held me—even made me listen to what he said. I must know first what he had in mind, and that way I could not learn. So I lay still, scowling the hatred I could not express in words or deeds.

"Wherefore," Elliott continued, "the father and I, your brother and his agent, must look to men to do his bidding, not timid old women and men of the same blood as these people themselves. Therefore I have planned. Give ear, my brothers, and say if my plan is good.

"On the night after this you shall go to the town and to the house of these teachers, when all lights are out. You shall take your hatchets and enter the house of these teachers. Then a quick blow and another. It will be simple. They are old men. There should be no sound. Yet so shall these teachers be—removed."

He paused somewhat before the last word, and though my back was toward him, I fancied that he smiled.

And after that word he paused again and a silence came down, while the Shawnees considered his words and I marveled at the cold-blooded treachery of the thing, as hellish in its conception as anything of which the whites ever accused the red men in all the years of war and bloodshed which had been or were to come.

After a time, however, the man he had called Gray Hawk opened his lips.

"Thy plan is a good plan, my brother," he declared. "What think my brothers the Black Snake and the Turtle?"

"Aye, it is a good plan, my brother," said he who sat in the middle.

"Aye," said he on the end.

"See to it then that my words lead to

acts with you, Shawnees," Elliott accepted. "Now hark ye. There is more. So shall two of the whites be removed from the town. But there is another. Have ye noted the—" he used a word which I can only best translate as wanton, since in their tongue it meant a woman of that stripe—"who teaches their children—a chit of red-brown hair?"

"Aye, we have seen her," the Black Snake said.

"Tomorrow," Elliott directed, while my breath clogged in my throat with rage, and I clenched my hands and tensed my muscles as I lay outside his tent and listened to his foul-mouthed naming of the woman I was here to serve; "you will learn where she lives. And after the two men have been sent on the long journey, you will go to that house and take her—yet harm her not in the act. And having taken her, you, Gray Hawk, will lead her to my place on the Sciota so quickly as you may, and see that she waits there my return.

"To that end you will tie your pack tomorrow night when you go to the town and leave it on the outskirts ready for your need. So then I have spoken, as thy brother and the agent of the father at Detroit. See that this thing is done."

Gray Hawk drew his hatchet and saluted as Elliott paused.

"This whole thing I have heard from the lips of my brother and the father," he made answer. "I and my brothers shall see that it is done."

"Aye, it shall be done," said the Turtle, "yet when it shall be discovered, shall it not appear that the Shawnees have done this thing if Gray Hawk be not in the camp?"

Elliott shrugged.

"Will the Shawnees betray a brother?" he responded quickly. "Still is the question well taken. Wherefore tomorrow shall Gray Hawk openly tie his pack and come to my tent, and say to any who asks that he goes on a mission for me as a runner to take word of the progress of the council to my brother McKee. Thus shall the reason for his absence be explained before he is gone."

"Our brother speaks good words once again," the Black Snake broke the following silence. "So then, shall this thing be done."

He placed his hand on his hatchet and stood up.



BUT I back of the tent was minded to think it would not be as he said. Lying silent as a shadow, scarce breathing while I watched them stalk past the fly, I was determined that no part of that plan, fit to have been hatched in the steaming mouths of hell far to the west where the priests of the evil spirit made their unholy worship as we red men believed, should be carried out.

Neither should the two white teachers be slain, nor should my maid be carried to Elliott's place by the Gray Hawk or any other foul bird of prey. But I could very well see how Elliott had planned the whole thing, how he had selected his men from the Shawnee party, for their fitness for the business, and written down their names. He had felt no fear of putting it on paper since he knew none of us could read the English script.

Oh, he had felt safe, but I wondered how he would feel if he knew one of the toothless wolves at whom he sneered was even now lying with an eye at the bottom of his tent and ears pricked against his plotting—aye, lying there quivering like a wolf indeed, when it sights the kill and longs to fling itself upon it; because of what he had heard and the name this fellow had called her who was fated to mate with that wolf.

Yet after a time I controlled that blind rage and drew back from the tent to once more thread a slow way out of the Shawnee camp in an opposite direction from that taken by the three braves, whose course I had marked by their footfalls when they left. And I confess now that the route out seemed doubly long, doubly hard to even that I had taken some time before, since now there was an urge of haste in my heart to reach my own place by Sheshequins and Nashoba and narrate what I had learned.

In the end I emerged from the midst of the sleeping warriors and slipped into the shadow of the forest, skirting the entire camp to come into it from a different direction and pass through it boldly as if coming from the town. So at length I reached my own place and found Sheshequins and Nashoba stretched out. I waked the latter by a pressure of my hand.

"Be quiet," I hissed, and stretched out at his side.

"You have learned?" he said in a whisper.

"Much," I returned, and told him the thing from beginning to end.

"The man is a snake," he grumbled thickly when I was through.

"Without the grace of rattles," I made answer. "He warns not before he strikes. Such is the plan he makes, but hark you, my brother. One man may plan as well as another."

"You have a plan?" he said.

"Aye—one I formed as I crawled among the sleeping bodies of the Shawnee spawn; one which will prove that Elliott lies in his throat when he says we be wolves without teeth. Will you give ear to what I have planned?"

"The White Wolf has listened, the Gray Wolf will listen now," he said softly, and drew closer to my side.

My heart warmed to him. He was always so ready to prove that tie of the blood rite which bound us together.

"Then," I resumed, "give ear. Thou and I shall bring this thing to naught. Would the White Wolf's fangs might fasten in this white man's throat. They should not relax until he had withdrawn his naming of that maiden. She is not what he plans to make her. She is no common trull."

"Nay," said Nashoba, as I spat out that final word. "She is a forest flower to whom no bee has carried pollen. Her eyes are as clear as the water of a spring. Her glance is more that of a young boy than a woman. Give the Gray Wolf thy plan that he may aid it, little brother."

"It is this, then," said I. "Tomorrow will you go for me among the Leni Lenapi and find there some wolves whose teeth are not yet dull. Tomorrow I myself shall tell this maiden what is intended and see to it that the white teachers know that a wolf-pack shall lair at night about their door. Also would it be well that one should see where this Gray Hawk lays down his pack when he enters the town tomorrow night, that we may bring it back."

"Then shall we of the Monseys go to the meeting tomorrow night, but we shall not return to the camp. Rather shall we lie in wait at the teachers' house until these slinking panthers come to make their kill. So shall we take them before they have

found their prey. What say you, Gray Wolf, of my plan?"

"It is a good plan," he accepted. "But what of the maiden? Should we not guard her also?"

"Her house lies farther from the camp than that of the teachers," I returned. "The Shawnees will make their kill first, before they have a woman on their hands, lest she cry out and so give warning or cause them to be discovered."

"Aye," said Nashoba, "thou art right. Tomorrow then shall I find this pack of young wolves who shall go with us tomorrow night. How many say you, my brother?"

"Not more than six with ourselves and one to discover where Gray Hawk leaves his pack, remove it and bring it back to the camp."

Sheshequins stirred, and sat up as we whispered together. Our talking had disturbed him and now he demanded to know what matter we discussed, as was his right as our father and a subchief of the tribe.

We told him, omitting nothing, so that at the end his breath was whistling through his nose, and he spat in contempt upon the grass.

"Thy plan is good, White Wolf, my son," he declared. "So shall the teachers and the maiden slip like a fish from between this white man's hands. It were a pity the Long Knives did not keep him in Pittsburgh when they had him within their grasp. It is well that he comes among us as a representative of the father at Detroit, else would he hardly depart as he came. Still—these be things for the ears of Pomoacan and Pipe."

"Nay, my father," Nashoba exclaimed in an eager voice. "What good to disturb the minds of our captains. Let be as our brother says. So shall all be done without disturbance, and the Shawnees shall learn they are not the only ones who can see by night."

I honestly think Nashoba was anxious for the coming venture, as I suppose I would have been myself had I felt less of personal concern in the outcome of the affair.

"Yet were Captain Pipe informed, he stands close to the father and might be able to prevent the agent's action," Sheshequins said.

"For the time," I returned. "Whereby

would Elliott but swallow his intent as a cow her cud to bring it up later, when we were not warned. But, having attempted it and failed, he will hesitate to try again, since then he will know that his alone will thereafter be the blame as now he hopes to shift it, or leave its fixing uncertain at best."

And I believe that is exactly what the man would have done. History today records that the Indians of the party which came to remove the Moravian towns, plotted the death of the teachers, but it does not mention Elliott's connection. Nor does it make any mention of Metta—that sweet Moravian maid, against whom also he plotted an unclean fate. But I who lived through those days and weeks know whereof I speak, and how he was balked in his plan by the wolves at whom he sneered.

With Sheshequins my words seemed to carry weight also, because after a time, he said that they were good words, and that Nashoba and I should carry out our plan. And having spoken his final decision he stretched himself out and once more went to sleep.

But before he slept he asked me further—

"This white maid has entered thy heart, my little white son?"

The form of his question touched me. It had been long since he had used my childhood name.

"Aye, my father," I answered. "She is the only woman who has ever filled my eyes."

"It is a poor stag which will not fight for the doe," he made slow answer. "Welsheetmonet may have led your feet on this trail, my son—since till now your heart has been as free as the eight winds, which blow as they will. Tomorrow I and the Gray Wolf shall select your other wolves."

Nashoba struck me with the fist of his hand and stretched out. I laid myself down. But it was long before I slept. For the first time in my life I thrilled with the scent of what might be a real adventure. I lay and planned the discomfiture of the Shawnees again and again. And I confess I was guilty of wondering what Metta would say and do when she knew what I intended, and what I had learned. She had been kind to me today. Would she be still more kind then?



YET what she did do when the next day I had led her into the forest and told her the whole thing from first to last, was to shrink back for a moment with widened eyes and quickened breath like one who has come suddenly upon a sudden danger in the grass and stands arrested for the moment. And then she cried out:

"That man! White Wolf—I am afraid of that man. His eyes are the eyes of all evil, and I have never forgotten the glance he cast upon me that night at the church house. It was a thing to make a true woman ashamed."

"Fear not, Little Stream," said I. "Have I not seen that this snake is coiled, ere he strikes and so taken steps that his stroke shall fall short?"

"Aye," she answered me slowly. "I know. And I shall tell the teachers what you have said, and who it is who will guard them this night."

"Them and you will the wolves of the Leni Lenape guard—mate of the White Wolf to be," I declared. "Surely it is written that this thing shall not be done, since the plan has been revealed in its making. Thou needst not fear."

"Nay, I shall not fear," said my maiden, looking into my face. "Tonight as on any other I shall stretch myself on the sleeping bench, while you stand guard between me and this other who would do me harm. But see that thy guard is strong, oh, White Wolf, since should it fail thou needst not seek for Metta of the Moravians again."

Looking back into her eyes I found them dark as some shaded pool in the forest, yet fired by some strange light like the spark of a star reflected in the pool through the overhanging branches which arched it; the light of a far purpose it seemed. And standing there before her I felt my heart slow in its beating, and start again with a sudden leap as I sensed dimly what that purpose might be.

"What mean you, Little Stream?" I asked.

"Do you think I might die within the talons of the Hawk rather than be given into the hands of this agent of the father?" she answered me strongly.

"Aye," I replied, and bent my head. "So I think it would be. Wherefore the guard of the wolves shall be strong between you

and the Gray Hawk's talons, little maid."

And at that she smiled and came close to lay her hand upon my arm, still looking up into my face, so that I put my arm about her and sensed her supple strength, almost without knowing that I did so. But at the touch of her my heart went leaping again, and I knew that none should reach her to do her any harm so long as it beat at all, and I found myself wishing that Elliott were not the agent of Detroit, that I might deal with him man to man, and engage him with knife or hatchet and so remove for all time the peril of his living from her path.

And while I no longer believe in war or slaying in the general sense, still I am not yet convinced even though years of peace have rolled over my head that those gentle teachers were wholly right in their creed. In the main they may have been, as I will admit. But I still hold that there are times when a man or a nation may find it necessary—nay, right and just—to wage war, or to defend either some innocent person or some mighty principle of life, against the intended insults of evil.

For how is the evil which may threaten either men or nations to be met otherwise than by a force which destroys its power? Myself I do not know.

It was in such a mood I left her that day, and went back to the camp, walking with a strange spring in my stride which seemed

to stretch my muscles, limber them, make them slide smoothly and surely beneath my skin. And I know my hand was on the sheath of my hatchet with its hanging thrums of hide each tipped with a porcupine quill of a different color, which my sister Rosebud had made me with her own soft brown hands, and once my other hand loosened my knife in its sheath as though to prepare for the work that night, which should keep my own maid safe where she slept in Big Owl's cabin, and clip the wings of the Gray Hawk at the start of that flight he intended to make.

Aye, such thoughts were mine, and after all the years I still find myself thinking often in the symbolic fashion of the red man, whose thoughts were always drawn as a parallel of those forces of Nature among which he was born, and reared and lived, and from which he drew the strange sonorous beauty of his speech and the picturesque form of his diction, so different from the more direct and more practical talk of the white.

Hence I smiled somewhat grimly as I thought of the Gray Hawk flying all awry on his mission, and so blundering in a broken circle back to the Shawnee camp to report that his mission had failed. And the picture sent a tingle of premonitory pleasure through my blood, as I thought how I would tell my maid about the whole affair on the next afternoon.

TO BE CONTINUED

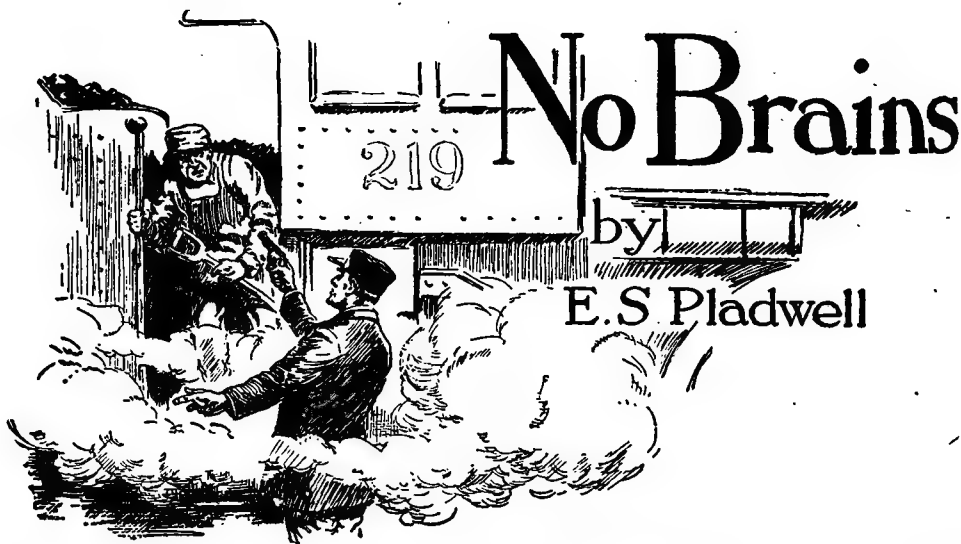
COMPENSATION

by OSCAR H. ROESNER

"**D**ARE not the air!" to me they cried,
 Fear, Caution and Old Age;
 "Sooner or later all have died,
 And you, too, court its rage."

What ken they of exultant sweep,
 Those crawlers on the ground,
 Of mounting deep on mighty deep
 Through air-seas lone, profound?

And if the destiny be mine
 To plunge to glorious death,
 Think of that last great sweeping line,
 That last exultant breath!



FLASHING the lights of its seven coaches, the Colorado Express stopped with a flourish of grinding brakes in front of Mesquite station and engineer "Dad" Kelly maneuvered his portly figure away from his levers and valves and swung to the ground. A freight was nearing the siding. Its headlight was shining on the long single-track tangent a half-mile ahead of the halted express and the old engineer knew he must wait some fifteen minutes before it clanked past, so he bucked the howling wind and ambled into the station-agent's office for orders and a chat, leaving his panting black monster under charge of his fireman.

It was a Wintry desert night, with cold stars staring from all the heavens and chill winds swirling and soughing about train and building impartially. Emerging from the warmth of the station when the freight had rumbled by, Dad Kelly was thankful that only sixty miles lay between him and the Gila City terminal. His desert-trained bones told him that worse weather impended. Already he could feel a trace of moisture in the Arizona air.

After a perfunctory look around his engine Dad Kelly climbed into the cab again, but as soon as he put his head above its floor his senses told him something was wrong and a glance about the cab confirmed it. The fireman was missing.

Dad looked out of the cab window. Darkness. He scanned the other side, toward the station window. There was still no fireman in sight. He called. The

agent appeared in the yellow light of his doorway.

"Where's 'Bud'?" roared the engineer. "Seen him?"

"No," was the reply and Dad yelled again for Bud without result. He descended from the cab and looked over the ground, but in vain. The minutes went by and Dad's brow began to furrow as he glanced at his watch. Still there was no fireman, though the engineer shouted himself hoarse.

The vestibule of a Pullman opened and the spectacled old conductor emerged and strode toward the engine.

"What's the matter?" he asked, nervously, as he drew abreast the big machine.

"Bud Mason's missing," said Dad. "Been gone some time; he's making us late. If he don't show up in one minute more you'll have to give me a brakeman. There's nobody else to get."

"Well—all right," agreed the reluctant conductor. "I'll ask Steve Bartlett."

He trotted back to the vestibule to seek his uniformed understudy while the engineer paced up and down and shouted for his missing helper.

A minute went by. Two minutes. Five minutes. Then out popped the conductor again, this time on the jump. He hunched his shoulders against the sweeping side-wind and shouted as he drew up to the impatient engineer.

"Steve Bartlett's gone too!" yelled the conductor.

"What?" roared Dad.

"He's gone! Look—here's his cap. I found it alongside the track just before going inside. What do you think of it?"

The conductor handed over a dark article with a metal shield in front bearing the legend "Brakeman." Dad handled the thing for a moment and then, in the half-light from the station window, engineer and conductor eyed each other curiously. The same thought had flashed into both their minds.

"Bud and Steve had it in for each other pretty bad," voiced the engineer at length. "There's been bad blood between 'em for a month. Bud was growling about it tonight, making threats under his breath. I wonder—oh, well; we'll have to get the train in. Send me a porter." And he turned away and climbed into the cab again thoughtfully, calling for Bud at times, while inside the spotless sleeper an outraged negro was notified of his martyrdom.

Next morning, Dad wandered into the grimy round-house to inspect his beloved engine and talk things over with its slow-thinking Swede wiper. The latter knew about the happenings of the night before; the whole division knew; but the Swede seemed least affected of all. He talked of boiler-tubes, condensers, fittings and flues, until at length he happened to put his hand into his pocket, and then he gingerly fished out four round objects.

"Look. I find these in the fire-box," offered the Swede.

Dad looked. They were the half-incinerated buttons of a railroad uniform.



"IT'S MURDER, of course," said the division superintendent late the same morning as he faced the mustached, gray-eyed sheriff across his desk at railroad headquarters. "The finding of those buttons clinches it. Bud Mason, the fireman, killed Steve Bartlett, the brakeman, possibly with a gun. The noise of the passing freight probably muffled the shot. Then the fireman shoved the victim into the fire-box while old Dad was in the agent's office at Mesquite. It's not nice to think about, but such things happen. So there you are. It's plain as the nose on your face."

The sheriff was thoughtfully puffing on his pipe. "Any motive?" he asked.

"Ye-es, I think so. I've got a pretty full report here. It says they had a little

row. It seems the fireman got the brake in on some gilt-edged mining stock that flivvered and the brake said the fireman unloaded the stuff because he was stuck with it himself. That started it. Then the brakeman's wife nagged him about the loss, so the irritation kept up. They say the wife's a holy terror. Of course that's mostly gossip, but you can have it for what it's worth."

"Um," grunted the sheriff. "Has this murderer got any relatives around here?"

The thin-faced superintendent consulted the railroad report.

"Only one I can see is an aunt who lives up at Blue Rock, up in the mountains. That's about fifty miles north of Mesquite."

"Good. I've got a man up at Blue Rock now on another job. I'll phone him. Is this man Bud Mason well known around here? I never heard of him before."

"You wouldn't. He comes and goes. Born in this country but wandered almost everywhere. He's only been on the railroad a few months."

"Huh," commented the sheriff. "Now, if this Bud Mason fellow stopped at ranch-houses near that station, folks might know who he was. That looks good." The sheriff arose and looked at a map on the wall studying the land about Mesquite intently. "There's twelve ranches within a twenty-mile circle of the station," he remarked at length. "If we strike the right ranch before the trail gets dim—well, that shouldn't be hard! Mesquite's pretty far from here, but now how about sending a half-dozen deputies with horses by railroad and then letting 'em spread out?"

"Easy. The next freight leaves in one hour."

"Fine. You've got a couple of railroad sleuths already on the job, so maybe the trail won't be hard to pick up at all. It looks like a quick job. You've got a good description, of course?"

The superintendent's brow wrinkled somewhat.

"We've got no photographs," he admitted, "and as for description—well, he's a chunky, florid-faced kid with a fairly broad nose and fairly thick lips and sort of light-dark hair and blue or hazel eyes and husky shoulders. That's about the best I can give you. Funny thing—the brake he killed weighed just the same as he did—about one-fifty. If they'd had an

honest scrap it might have been good."

"Yep; but it wasn't," sighed the sheriff, donning his cap. "That's always the trouble. Well, so long; you get the cars ready and I'll do the rest. I hope he's not one of those desperate fellows that shoots, but shoot or no shoot he'll come back—dead or alive!"



MUTTERING vituperation at every other step, a chunky figure climbed toward the top of a wind-swept ridge and braced himself as a chilly cross-wind caught him in the flank. It was bitterly cold and the man drew his frayed jacket-collar tighter about his throat and then shoved his numbing fingers back into his pockets quickly. Above, the stars shone wanly but enough to hold him always to his northward course across the desert, and from far away the lonely howl of a coyote gave an eery tone to the whistling wind; but the moody pedestrian kept his face straight ahead and trudged onward.

Five hours before he had worked in the warm cab of an engine as it clattered cheerily over the rails. Now the engine and the civilization it stood for were things reminiscient and the world to Bud Mason was cold ground, cold wind, cold stars and cheerless thoughts. The railroad and its people were objects for profanity, nothing more.

The man came to the top of the rounded ridge and struck the descending swale where he could look down on a dark, bare valley, surrounded by hills, with vague, square blobs in the center of the valley, barely distinguishable in the hazy starlight. In the middle of one of the dark patches a tiny light showed.

"That's it," muttered the fireman. "I knew I was right. That's Phil Sawyer's ranch. I've gone sixteen miles. It's only four mile more an' then I'll be on the right road to seein' Aunt Susie an' the kids up to Blue Rock. Me for it!" And despite the chattering of his teeth the man acquired new cheer and stumbled manfully toward his goal.

It was nearly dawn before the half-frozen wanderer arrived at the corral of the Sawyer ranch and ambled into the barn and made himself comfortable in the hay. Before noon he aroused himself and washed at the pump, after which he made his way

to the ranch-house, exchanged greetings with old Phil Sawyer, who knew his dad, and borrowed a horse and an overcoat after saying vindictive things about the railroad and all its people. This explained his severing connections with the railroad. He was not talking of the way he had really left.

With provender in his saddle-bags and a keen desire to see his kin, Bud Mason determined to make the thirty-odd miles in that one day. It was long past noon when he started from the ranch and he had an uphill trail most of the way, but when the gusty, stormy evening came he found himself within nine miles of his goal. The old trail he finally swung into was not the main road from Blue Rock, but a relic of days when mines had been opened to be abandoned later for worthier prospects. Only one human appeared within Bud Mason's ken all day and that was an old "desert rat" wandering about the far-away hills, followed by a burro.

But something else had claimed the fireman's attention when he struck the old trail. In the half-softened ground fresh hoof-prints showed ever before him. Mostly he saw, the horse had been running, but sometimes the prints showed the one-two-three-four of an animal just walking along. In the tortuous road, flanked by giant boulders, or the shoulders of gaunt dirt-hills, or vistas of tall sagebrush or greasewood, the fireman could not see far ahead nor tell how long since the horse had passed, so he put in his aimless time speculating about it. Primitive things occupy the desert-man's mind in the desert, and Bud had returned to his own.

Night came and the fireman gave the weary horse its head. An hour passed and Blue Rock was growing nearer. The wind was dying but the rain came thicker and Bud blessed Phil Sawyer's long coat. Riding easily, Bud bethought himself of his provisions. He started munching a thick sandwich just as the horse turned the shoulder of a craggy hill and a light appeared some distance up a rocky gulch.

Surprised, Bud reined in his horse and looked again. There was no mistaking it. Not four hundred yards away was a shanty with a dim, yellowish glare appearing from its window and between the cracks of its wall-planking.

"Geel!" muttered the perplexed Bud.

"Let's see." He looked around carefully to get his bearings from the dim landmarks. "This'll be Dirty Water Cañon. That's right. Then that'll be the old Merry Hope mine. There hasn't been any one there since '84. I wonder who in thunder's in that shanty. Well, it won't cost nothin' to take a look. I'd as lief git out of the rain anyhow."

Thus deciding, Bud swung himself from the saddle and led his horse off the trail and flipped the reins off its head till they hung down from the bit. The desert-trained horse would stand thus till doomsday if necessary. Then Bud walked cautiously up the muddy broken-rock gully toward that light. He had little fear. The railroad and its people were many miles behind him and the person in the cabin must be friend or stranger. Either way he expected some sort of welcome.

A horse nickered softly as Bud made his way over the muddy slope toward the shanty. Bud stopped and peered into the shadows. It was a big animal, standing almost behind the shack and eating wisps of grass that reflected a glimmer of light from the chinks of the wall. That explained the hoof-prints, thought Bud. He went forward again.

The door of the shanty was just slightly ajar. Bud called, pushed it open, and laid a foot on the creaking threshold. Then he halted and gaped.

Spreading faded blankets on the scarred and creaky old floor and humming a tune to himself was brakeman Steve Bartlett, the man supposed to be murdered.



"YOU!" breathed Bud, his eyes dilating with astonishment.

The other looked up, his mouth opened, and he staggered and turned white. Then he whipped his right hand to a holster at his side. His fingers closed on the butt of a revolver and he straightened up quickly, pointing the black muzzle straight at the fireman. The latter's expression changed to utter disgust.

"That's it!" sneered the fireman, putting empty hands up to his shoulders. "That's right; grab a gun. It's the first thing you always think of!"

In the dim light from a candle on what was once a table the broad-shouldered brakeman's dark face showed a scowl, but in his eyes was an expression of dismay and

the visitor wondered at it. In fact, he wondered at many things.

"Wadda you doin' here?" demanded the deep-voiced brakeman.

"Tryin' to git away from you," snarled Bud, irritably. "You chased me off the railroad with that gun—wasn't you satisfied? Did you have to follow me all over the map?"

"Follow you? Huh—I was here first!"

That was true and Bud wondered some more. The whole thing was queer—garish—and in that cabin of lights and shadows Bud felt like a man in a strange dream. But the pistol-muzzle still covered him and that was hard, cold fact.

"Well, what are you doin' here?" queried Bud, in return. "Did the railroad git sick of you an' fire you?"

"No. I left of my own accord."

There was a sneer behind it and Bud felt his gorge rising at that cool statement.

"Well, I didn't!" he rasped, in helpless anger. "After you met me alongside the engine an' wouldn't fight fair an' pulled a gun an' told me never to show up near you again, I took your advice. I'm no gun-fighter! I don't want to be near a skunk like you anyhow! Then what? Then I travel forty-seven miles—an' here's you! What's the big idea?"

"Nothin'," snarled Steve Bartlett. "I wanted to leave the railroad. I seen you goin' south, so I went north. That's all. You circled around the station!" The last was like an accusation.

"I did. I hit for the Sawyer ranch. Then I struck for my home, up this way. Well, what about it?"

"I came straight," volunteered the brakeman, licking his lips. "Like I always do," he added, pointedly.

"You lie!"

There was a flash and a roar and the candle flickered. Something hot streaked down in front of Bud's right toe and a piece of planking shattered into bits amid the smoke. Bud could not help jerking away.

"That's enough from you," came the brakeman's cold voice.

"Yeh? Well, you wouldn't talk so without that gun!" sobbed Bud, gulping and clenching his raised hands. "Where's your uniform?" he added, accusingly, as his eyes noted Bartlett's brand new overalls.

"Burned it in the fire-box," replied the brakeman. "What's it to you?"

"Ashamed to wear it, I suppose," sneered Bud. "It's about time!"

The man with the pistol began to lose his temper entirely.

"Say—you—git outa here!" he roared in hot anger. "I didn't invite you here—now git! I've had enough from you!"

Bud knew he was right up to the limit of the other's temper, yet he knew he had somehow embarrassed the man as well as angered him, and the fireman felt maliciously pleased about it; but that pistol was not a thing to fool with and neither was the savage-tempered man behind it. The brakeman had a record among hoboos on the division and had taken a life or two very casually. Bud turned away, but he could not refrain from a few parting remarks.

"All right," he flung over his shoulder. "You've got a six-shooter. I'll go. You can always git me away with a gun—but not any other way. You're not big enough!"

The sting of it made the other wince and hesitate between pulling trigger and jumping at his tormentor. Bud saw it and followed up his advantage with wary sarcasm.

"Come to think of it, I don't blame you for packin' that cannon around. Otherwise you'd git licked. If you was man enough to have it out proper, once for all—but what's the use in talkin' to you?"

The dark face of the brakeman showed a darker scowl and the pistol-barrel wavered for a second.

"Yeh?" he grated. "Well, guns was made for cheap swindlers like you! I oughta plugged you when you hooked me with that crooked minin' deal, you sneakin' coyote!"

Bud half-turned and his own blue eyes blazed with anger as he looked into the brown ones of the irritated brakeman. Then Bud glanced at the deadly pistol-muzzle again and his hot retort faded to a whisper.

"Put—put that gun down an' I'll give you an answer," he invited, very slowly.

The other eyed him, threw aside his hesitation, and made quick decision, striding to a side-window in the rickety old shanty and grasping the pistol by the barrel.

"All right," he snarled. "I oughta shot you a dozen times but I couldn't do it in cold blood. Now I'm goin' to take it outa your crooked hide. You see this gun?

All right; over she goes." And he reached an arm past the fragments of old glass about the window-ledge and let the pistol drop outside. "Now," he inquired, turning and straightening up, "what was it you was goin' to say?"

Something like triumph appeared in Bud's light eyes.

"I was goin' to remark," he replied, easily, "that you was a crawlin', whinin', whimperin', gun-totin', blusterin' cry-baby that sniveled like a whipped pup when you lost on a decent gamble! Concernin' your personal remarks to me, I was goin' to say you're a dirty liar!"

"Take off your coat!" quivered the restrained voice of the maddened brakeman. "We'll do this proper!"

Dancing with eagerness and kicking aside the blankets on the floor, the man by the door peeled off his overcoat in a second and tossed his hat into a corner. The brakeman was more deliberate, standing on the creaky boards and watching the other with a cynical smile, though his hands itched for action.

It was not an ideal fighting-ring. The ancient boards were gone from the dusty floor in places and in other places their warped ends curved upward or downward to make the footing uncertain. Almost in the center of the shanty a rusty old stove half-slanted toward a weakening rear wall and over all the dripping candle threw its feeble light from the rickety, dusty table in the corner.

But within one second after Bud had cleared for action Brakeman Steve Bartlett had abandoned his cynical smile. A fist had crashed right into its center. Growling with rage, Bartlett swung back blindly and Bud saw a constellation from his right eye.

With new respect for each other but with new resolve, the muscular warriors backed off and measured their moves scientifically, after which they crashed together again with eager arms flailing madly. There was no talk, there was a clatter of scuffling feet, the thud of blows that crunched into bone and sinew, and the sobbing of breaths that grew more labored; but there was a desperate, earnest silence about it that meant a fight to the finish.

With his lips grown thicker, his ears ringing and his nose dripping red, the sweating brakeman crouched and rushed

his half-blinded opponent after two minutes of straight battering. A piece of floor-end jammed into his shoe-heel and he tripped forward, grabbing the other's waist to save himself from falling just as a pile-driver blow struck his forehead. He slumped down and the other fell on top of him snarling something about "dirty work." From then on it was ferocity.

Bud slammed at Bartlett's face while Bartlett crashed trip-hammer fists into his stomach. They clinched and half-arose as they wrestled till Bartlett got Bud across the stove. Then the ancient pipe tumbled down with a crash and buried both their faces in soot and dust and rust. A piece opened Bud's scalp but he writhed from under and hurled the other away, then charged him with head down and nearly battered him through the joists of the side-wall. Bartlett rammed him against the stove again.

They kicked each other's shins. They gouged. They sought each other's throats. They smashed each other against the wall and wrestled, panting and disheveled and sooty, with their shirts in rags. They parted and came together savagely. Bartlett was slammed against a board and his sweaty shirt ripped to the waist while his straining muscles stood out like whipcord. He flailed out with a mighty fist that caught Bud's throat and made him choke. Bud laid open his streaming mouth still more.

They clinched. They tripped each other up and writhed around the floor, sobbing with ferocious desire. They wriggled to their feet and smashed at each other blindly, each blow raising its welt. They backed away and crouched for another spring.

"Hands up!" yelled a sharp voice.

The panting, sobbing, half-naked men swayed and turned in amazement toward the door. A tall, slim, hook-nosed person in overalls, cowhide boots and Stetson hat stood there holding a pistol impartially toward the pair. On his left chest was a glinting star bearing the legend "Deputy Sheriff."

Both men stared at the newcomer dazedly through blinking eyes and then obeyed the mandate in wonder.

"Sorry to stop your pleasure, gents," drawled the deputy's slow voice, "but which one of you's Bud Mason?"

"I am," hiccuped the reeling fireman.

"Why?"

"Then you're under arrest for the murder of Steve Bartlett!"



FOR an instant Bud's brain revolved in a dizzy circle and then his lacerated face contorted into something dimly resembling a grin.

"Not yet," he gasped, "but soon. Lemme alone, you—lemme alone!"

The deputy advanced and grabbed Bud's jerky arm while tapping the pistol-muzzle on his half-naked chest.

"This ain't a joke," drawled the deputy, grimly. "You better wash up an' come along!"

Bud choked and sputtered.

"Why—why, you darned fool—that's Steve Bartlett over there," he gurgled, pointing a weakened finger toward his battered and puffing opponent.

Bartlett passed a hand over his aching face and when the hand was gone he showed a trace of that cynical smile again through the reddish soot of his visage.

"You lie!" he choked through a half-toothless mouth. "What—what's the big idea?"

Bud drew in a long breath and swayed with astonishment. He tried to talk but only gasped.

"Hell!" he finally groaned, as he tried to spring forward. "Lemme at him!"

"Whoa!" snapped the deputy, holding arm and pistol relentlessly. "None o' that!"

"But—I tell you—he's Bartlett!" screamed the baffled Bud. "What's this all about, anyhow? He ain't murdered! Lemme go! He's Bartlett, I tell you!"

"You lie!" croaked Bartlett, hoarsely, as he braced himself against the stove for support.

"Of course; Steve Bartlett's dead," agreed the calm deputy. "The railroad's got all the evidence. Better think o' some other yarn!"

Bud felt like a man in a bad dream. Swaying weakly, he looked from the half-grinning Bartlett to the matter-of-fact deputy and wondered if every one had gone insane.

"Tell it to the jedge," advised the officer of the law. "Meantime, git on your duds an' travel!"

The man was not joking and Bud clenched his fists hopelessly. In the eyes of Steve Bartlett he read malicious triumph

and Bud's soul revolted. His previous ferocity was nothing to this; he wanted to tear that grinning brakeman into little threads and scatter the pieces all over the desert; but in the white heat of this new anger his brain-machinery was stoked to a higher efficiency than ever before and he found himself thinking in lightning-flashes. This man, Steve Bartlett, wanted to get away from the railroad for some reason. He wanted to disappear entirely. If Bud went with the deputy Bartlett would disappear and Bud would have to face judge and jury alone, without this witness to help him out. Bud could not see what this murder charge was all about, but if Bartlett could be made to accompany him to town, where folks would know them both. . . .

"All right," roared Bud. "I'll go, but this fellow goes with me!" He pointed a dramatic, accusing finger at Bartlett, whose expression began to change swiftly. "I'll confess! I only helped kill Bartlett. I only had a scrap with him. That fellow shot him durin' the fight!"

"What? You lie!" shrieked the dumfounded Bartlett.

The deputy looked puzzled and began to swing the pistol-muzzle slightly away from Bud. The brakeman seemed paralyzed.

"You lie! You lie!" panted Bartlett. "Sheriff, this man's gone crazy!"

"Yeh? Well, you dirty skunk, I've got the evidence!"

"Where?" demanded the bewildered deputy.

"This fellow's got a ca'tridge belt. Notice it?" pointed the sobbing Bud. "See that empty holster? Yeh. Well, under that window-ledge you'll find the gun. It's only been in the rain a few minutes. If you look at it right smart you'll find there's one ca'tridge shot away. It's the gun that killed Bartlett—an' it ain't been cleaned yet!"



"IT'S the most damnable muddle I ever heard of!" said the superintendent at railroad headquarters. "First there's a murder, then killer and dead man disappear, and then a deputy finds 'em fighting in a shanty. Then the killer gets arrested and seems to pin the killing on the man who was killed, overruling the objections of the latter!" The super's lined and wrinkled face took on an expression infinitely sarcastic. "Before we

interview slayer and slain," he resumed, "we might as well take testimony from the deputy. How about it, Deputy? How did you find 'em in the first place?"

The superintendent was lolling in a swivel chair beside his littered desk. Flanking him was the sheriff and his deputy, and on the other side of the desk were Bud Mason and Steve Bartlett, standing morosely with heads down like culprits at trial, which they were. The puzzled sheriff had tried to untangle the thing at the jail but the strain was too great, so he had taken the men before their boss at headquarters for an interview.

Outside, a freight-train was making up noisily and whiffs of smoke from the engine occasionally blew in through the superintendent's windows and added pungency to the scene. At times the clanging bell outside made judge and witnesses shout.

"Well," roared the deputy, "I happened to be in Blue Rock, so soon's I got the 'phone message about the murder I got on my hawss an' moseyed around some. I didn't have no idee o' goin' far; I jest wanted to sort o' poke around in case the man come into the village; so bimeby I got on the old mine trail an' struck the Merry Hope shanty an' seen a hawss near the road an' a light in the shack. Natural, I looked into it.

"There was two strangers fightin' inside an' I took a chance that one o' them was Mason. His hawss had come a long ways, so it looked like it might be him. When he owned up so easy I was sort o' s'prised, but when he up an' blamed the other man an' showed me the loaded gun with one ca'tridge missin', I was plumb staggered. The other fellow said he lied an' showed a hole there he said he'd fired into the floor o' the shanty; but by that time the whole mess looked so queer I thought I might's well bring 'em both in.

"Safety first—that's me. I handcuffed 'em. I didn't have much trouble with Mason, but the other one was considerable restless." And the deputy gave Bartlett a baleful glare. "Then," he finished, "I met the posse from Mesquite an' tamed him."

"Fine," murmured the cigar-chewing superintendent. The bell-ringing outside had ceased for a time. "Now, Bartlett, will you please explain why you were so restless?"

Bartlett showed a flash of defiant brown eyes before he looked at the frayed carpet again.

"I wanted to git away an' stay away," he mumbled.

"What for?"

There was an awkward silence, then—

"Too much wife," muttered Bartlett.

"Ah! At last we're beginning to see light ahead!" exclaimed the superintendent.

"Now we'll leave you for a minute and see what Mister Mason has to say about leaving the railroad so suddenly while on duty. Tell us all about it, Mason. Why was it?"

"He drove me off with a gun," accused Bud.

"What for?"

"Why—we had trouble about some minin' stock I sold him. He was always beefin' about it. On the day he drove me off he was worse'n ever. When the train got into Mesquite an' Dad went into the station we had a long wait, an' bimeby Bartlett come up to the side o' the engine an' started yowlin' again. He wanted me to pay back what he lost. I said I couldn't an' wouldn't. He said I would, or else he'd drive me off the road.

"I called him a big cry-baby an' from then on the words got warmer till at last he pulled out his six-shooter an' told me to beat it before he filled me with lead. 'I said I'd drive you off'n the railroad an' now I will,' says he, an' with that he give me one minute to fade into the sage-brush, so I faded. He was jest about mad enough to mean business. An' then I rode more'n forty mile an' bumped right into him again!"

"Well, why didn't you go into the station and get protection?"

"Aw—I ain't no child," protested the squirming Bud. "If I'd done that the whole division would start snickerin'. You know how such things go. I didn't care about stayin' anyhow. I was sick o' the whole business. I figgered the fellow'd lose his temper some day an' git me anyhow, so I breezed away. What was the use in stayin'?"

"Um. Quite logical," remarked the superintendent, still in his sarcastic mood. "Now, Bartlett, it's your turn. What did you do after you threatened this other man off the train?"

"Me? Why, I burned my uniform an' chucked my hat away an' left."

"Why did you burn the uniform?"

"Why—I wanted to leave mysterious. I couldn't go around the desert in them clothes an' if I left 'em behind folks might see I'd walked away deliberate, so I changed clothes an' burned 'em up—pants an' all—so's not to leave a trace. I wanted to burn the hat, too, but I knew the metal brakeman's plate wouldn't burn, so I jest chucked it."

"*Phew!* Deep planning, that! And where did you get your horse?"

"Oh, I jest borrowed a range horse from the Mesquite ranch pastures. They'd never miss it."

"I see. And you just had to get away? Was there no other way out?"

A pained expression appeared on the brakeman's dark face.

"Why—Mister Warren, you got no idea what a merry little hell I had in my house since that mine deal flivvered! Things might 'a' been rough sometimes before that, but when my bank account loped away the wife jest jawed an' nagged an' sneered till I pretty near went crazy! It got so I couldn't sleep, couldn't eat, couldn't hardly think; so I made up my mind to git that money back from Mason or else be missin' for good. I didn't git the money back, so—well Mesquite was the place I picked to leave from. It's the jumpin'-off place anyhow. That's all."

"And you drove Mason away from the railroad first. Was that in the original plan?"

"No, sir. He got me so mad I pretty near killed him, so I told him to beat it before I did kill him. I wasn't thinkin' about myself then!"

"Great Scott!" roared the startled superintendent. "And then you carried out your program!"

"Yes, sir," admitted the mumbling brakeman, still looking at the floor. "I had my mind set to disappear mysterious, so I did."

"You did!" groaned the superintendent, passing a tired hand over his face. "*Phew!* No brains—no brains—no brains! Didn't you realize you might have gotten this other man into serious trouble—maybe hanging for murder?"

"No, sir," quavered the brakeman. "I never thought of it. On my honor, I never thought about that till the deputy came into the shanty an' arrested him for my murder!"

"Yeh," broke in the scornful deputy, "and then what? An' then' up in that shanty, you'd of sneaked away an' let this man be blamed. You're a hot citizen, you are!"

Bartlett's face flushed red and he quivered under the lash of the deputy's scorn and his own.

"I know," he muttered, chokingly. "It was all wrong. I shouldn't of done it. But I wanted to git away!" The last was a sob from a tortured soul. "Gawd—you don't know how I wanted to git away! An' then, when I was jest started right, that fireman walked into the shanty an' queered all my plans, jest by his comin'. I didn't care then what I did. I was fightin' mad. I hoped he would be hung. That's all I can say—I was fightin' mad. And I wanted to git away—far away for good! That's about all, I guess." And he gulped and his voice faded away to a mumble.

The superintendent was tapping on his desk abstractedly with his pencil and both railroad men knew that judgment was about to be given. Far away the switch-engine's bell clanged, but that was the only

sound heard in the room until the superintendent straightened up and tossed the pencil on the desk.

"You!" he snapped, pointing at Bud. "You go back to work. Remember hereafter that when you're fired off the railroad you'll be fired properly. Kindly disregard the orders of brakemen with pistols. As for you——"

The superintendent slowly looked the brakeman over.

"You," he continued, at length, "are about the smallest-brained pin-head I've ever seen! You've severed your connection with the railroad, so I can't punish you. Neither can the sheriff. Unless the Mesquite ranch people want to prosecute you for horse-borrowing, nobody can. Why, you even escape punishment at home!"

The brakeman quivered slightly and looked up in wonder while the superintendent shook a disgusted and sarcastic head.

"No brains—no brains," he sighed. "All your misguided scheming was useless anyhow. Why, you wooden-headed idiot—your wife sued for divorce the day you left Mesquite!"



by
Gordon
McCreagh

Safe and Sane

Author of "That Blasted Discipline," "An Officer and a Gentleman," etc.

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER RADER smiled slowly, almost paternally, and altogether grimly as the girl by his side chattered on with gay irresponsibility. That so composite smile might be analyzed to betoken quite a lot of emotions. Tender indulgence, for one thing, of an older, steadier man for the bubbling spirits of a young girl; pride for the prize which had fallen to him in open competition with younger men; a comfortable feeling of

confidence; and a whole lot of other things. But the grimness was the tight-lipped smile which presently grows on those men whose duty is entered in the Service records as "extra hazardous."

Qualified Navy flyer and hangar chief of Coast Patrol Unit E, life in these strenuous days was a very serious matter to C. P. O. Rader. There were other flyers in the unit, some qualified, and some under instruction, young dare-devils all; but the final

responsibility for the fitness of every one of the nine hydros in the station lay on the shoulders of the hangar chief—and the hangar chief was a man who took no chances.

Presently it was dimly borne in on his wandering mind, immersed in that troublesome wing alignment of H-7, that a long silence had displaced the girl's careless prattle. Instantly he was solicitous.

"What's the deep study, li'l girl?"

But the girl seemed to experience difficulty in giving voice to her thoughts. The man had to coax confidence into her. Suddenly she unburdened herself.

"I wish you'd give it up, Joe," she dared.

"Give up!" wondered Rader aghast. "Give up what, girl?"

"This—this aviation business."

The man was immediately comfortingly persuasive.

"Why, girly, what's the matter now, wanting me to quit the business? You've never been afraid before."

"No, it's not that, Joe; I'm not afraid for you. It's—well I wish you'd get transferred to something else."

Chief Rader was a man of single ideas. The girl's disclaimer did not impress him at all. He proceeded along the line of dominant thought.

"You've nothing to worry about, girl. 'Tisn't as if I was a stunt flyer. I never get up and pull fool stunts in the air; I fly strictly according as the flag for the day says. Even when it's single hops and I've got no passenger I never exceed orders."

"Yes, I know," the girl almost sobbed. "That's just it. You nev—oh, I wish you'd give it up!"

The enigmatic disconnection conveyed nothing to Rader. He patted her encouragingly on the shoulder.

"There now, take a hold on yourself, Gracie girl, and forget all about it. Give it up! Why we're figuring to start the little nest with the fifty per cent. increase on my pay which I draw on account of the 'extra hazardous'! And you know that it's a soft graft, coz there's no danger nowadays any more in straightaway stuff. Come along, cheer up and kiss me good-by. I can't snatch but half an hour out o' dinner time; those busses are crankier'n a gas blimp these days."

Rader, like all "plane" men, professed a deep-rooted abhorrence for the intricate

and unwieldy lighter-than-air dirigibles, though he well knew, to the cost of many gray hairs, what an impossible task it was to keep even three of his nine machines fit for duty all at one time.

"Five thousand aviators in a year!" He barked a short laugh as he hurried into the wire-fenced enclosure of the station. "Five hundred'll be stepping some! But I guess Unit E'll come to scratch. They're good boys, I've got, even if they are a bit wild."

And Chief Rader was very close to being right. Five thousand was a stupendous figure when it came to speaking of trained flyers. But the Navy was doing its strenuous share. Only the pick of the long gray ships came into aviation; the best machinists; the best observers; the best educated men; and incomparably the physical best. With the help of God, then, and of very many tried, selected, two- and three-term men like Rader the thing might be barely possible.

The chief hurried to the strip of smooth beach which lay behind the great steel-frame asbestos-walled hangars. "Turn to" after dinner had not sounded yet, but the crews of Numbers Five and Eight, the only two machines in commission for the time being, were already grouped about the long runways which sloped gently from the boardwalk down to the water. Class H, the Navy rated these machines; that is to say, hydro-biplanes mounted on a central pontoon with subsidiary floats at the end of each lower plane. They rested each on a low, flat, four-wheeled truck at the head of their respective runways.

"Good, lads!" commended Rader. "Run 'em in and beach 'em. I don't suppose your engines need warming up, but just give the sticks a spin anyhow."

He turned to H-6, standing on its truck just outside the hangar door with a laughing, indignantly vociferous group around it. The center of the disturbance was a lean, slenderly-built young man with a careless, astonishingly boyish face who wore a regulation flying helmet with heavy goggles pushed back over his forehead.

"'Lo, Chief," he greeted with the easy familiarity of extreme youth. "What's matter with the buzzer this time? Why don't she tick?"

Rader smiled with his habitual slow indulgence.

"Putting in a Christensen self-starter, so overconfident boys won't get their knuckles rapped spinning a propeller."

So far from being abashed, the youth turned on the others and crowed aloud.

"There y'are!" he jeered joyously. "Jes what I was tellin' yuh poor jays! Got ta have new-fangled push-button starters now 'coz yuh amatoor Service flyers can't twirl a seven-foot stick with a meazly ninety-horse behind it."

"Amateur, ——!" growled one of the men on whom the rough joshing bit deep, "if you'd seen 'Heinie' Meyers heaved over the tool shack with an arm an' a leg an' three ribs broke when Number Five back-fired on him you'd be glad for a starter yourself."

The reminder sobered the youngster for a few seconds. But his was the happy imperviousness of irrepressible youth. In a moment his mood of tormenting raillery returned. He grinned slyly as he picked up the thread.

"Anyway, a regular flyer don't get in the way of no propellers. Now I got a eight-foot stick on my scout with a hunnerd 'n twenny-five break horse-power, an' I never been beaned yet. No sirree, a regular flyer don't have to have no starter. One o' these days I'm comin' over an' show you guys some real flyin'. I'll——"

The rest of his grandiloquent oration was howled down by a discordant and prolonged chorus in imitation of blaring horns. When the youth had subsided, beaten, and the clamor had ceased—

"Hark to that kid spread his wings," muttered H-5's mechanic admiringly.

But there was bitterness in the tone of the qualified airman in charge of the machine.

"Yeah," he conceded discontentedly. "We'll hand it to you, 'Bud' Larsen; you're a crackerjack an' all, we'll admit. But there's others could fly too—if they was let."



RIGHT there the hangar chief thought it was time to take a hand. Bud Larsen was one of those anomalies of the Service, a civilian instructor. He had made an enviable name for himself doing sensational exhibition work, and he was now engaged by the Government to try and impart some of his phenomenal knowledge of balance to others, and incidentally to connect Unit E, whenever the

occasion should arise, with Units D and F on either side along the coast, using a fast, light, land machine with that boasted eight-foot stick and the hundred and twenty-five brake horse-power.

As a civilian, he was inclined to view with impatience the restrictions of discipline and to torment diabolically those less fortunate ones who were subject to the bonds.

Such an example was very bad indeed for the souls of prospective Naval aviators. Young men of the highest spirit, and possessed of that American something which has made the *Escadrille* in France what it is, they chafed under the regulations which imposed certain strictly defined limits on their maneuvers in the air.

Chief Petty Officer Rader, then, in the absence of the two flight lieutenants who commanded the unit, felt that it was up to him to preach the age-old and ever-necessary gospel. He spoke with slow emphasis.

"What you've got to get into your noodle, young feller, is that in the Navy we fly strictly according to orders. We don't bank more'n forty degrees because regulations forbid. We don't climb more'n twenty-five because our officers say so. We don't nose dive and pancake our landings because the official angle of safety for class H type N-9 has been figured out at forty-five.

"Regulations say that in the Navy we fly safe and sane. And lemme tell you this, boy: as long as you're flying for the Navy, you'll fly according to regulations." He glared meaningly at the younger, impatient spirits. "Same as the rest of us do. Without kicking either."

Having expounded his religion, the doctrine of inexorable discipline, he strode to the machines on the beach. There was a short silence after him, and then a rising wave of discontented murmurings.

"Yeah, that's the trouble with old 'Safe-an'-Sane.' He'll never dast take a chance outside o' regulations—an' he'll never make a flyer!"

"No more'll none of you at the same rate," taunted Bud Larsen.

A growl of discontent showed what the younger spirits thought.

"Well," Bud shook the care from his youthful shoulders, "'s none o' my funeral. Le's see this self-starter thing anyway. I'm

thinkin' o' gettin' one installed, an' then I'll show you guys how to land on Domino Rock out there."

Immediately howls of derisive contention went up from the men.

"Hark at that boy shoot the gas!"

"Domino Rock! Why she ain't but thirty-foot wide at the best, an' a bare hundred an' twenty long!"

"Well? I'm a regular flyer, I want you dubs to understand."

"Regular nut, ye mean. S'pos'n even ye could shoot for center o' thirty-foot track—which is some stunt, kid, lemme tell yuh—ye'd need full hundred for yer run before stopping: *and* there's that step a full two-feet high bang across which would smash yuh up to toothpicks."

Domino Rock was just as the indignant airmen had described it. A long, flat-topped ledge about a mile out from shore and awash at high tide, with the additional prohibitive feature of that abrupt step, it would surely be a crazy stunt even for the most reckless young fool to attempt. But Bud Larsen had all the nerve of the devil as well as all the supreme confidence of uncurbed youth.

"I'll show you slobs what flying is one o' these days," he laughed.

And again the imitation of Gabriel's trumpet drowned him out.

"Gangway!" called a sudden voice.

The men scattered and stood to attention as the two officers of the unit came down the concrete pathway. Rader slopped up out of the water with squelchy shoes.

"Five an' Eight O. K., sir. Wind, eighteen miles an' steady northwest."

"Good. I think we'd better make it double hops then."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Rader megaphoned through his hands to the signal and observation tower—

"Double hops!"

The square blue and whitechecked flag ran smoothly up. Then—

"Arnold and Domler, break out helmets and goggles for instruction flights."

The crews of H-5 and 8, four men to each, in bathing suits, maneuvered their machines 'round till they pointed out into the bay and the sterns of the pontoons grated on the sandy beach. The men under instruction scrambled into the front seats. The officers followed more leisurely with a careless disregard of personal in-

spection which was an astounding piece of negligence for men about to trust their lives to the slender efficiency of struts and brace wires.

But, then, it was C. P. O. Rader who had O. K'd them. His confidential report, that thing which the enlisted man never sees, was an open sheet to the officers in charge. Slow-thinking and deliberate, he had absorbed discipline and the traditions of the Service till the one salient characteristic stood out against his name: "completely reliable." That was why he was hangar chief of Unit E.

"All clear," he called now.

"All clear," repeated the airmen in charge.

The chief mechanics threw their cranks over the compression and jumped nimbly from the pontoons. With the roar of machine guns the two machines glided from the shore and gathered speed, throwing a stinging deluge of spray at the men behind; and another strenuous afternoon had commenced.

C. P. O. Rader watched the machines one after the other porpoise, plane, and rise clear, and then he turned into the hangar with a particularly grim and a suddenly tired look on his face.



THAT evening he walked again with the merrily prattling girl whose choice for himself was still such an unbelievable marvel to him. This time it was his turn to fall grimly silent and thoughtful; and, in natural inversion, it was the girl who asked him with quick solicitude what was the matter. Once, she asked, and twice, and a third time with growing anxiety before he blurted out—

"I know why you want me to quit the flying game."

The girl started, and he felt the pressure of her hand on his arm contracting in a sudden grip. He continued with hard determination. It was difficult for him to say this thing:

"You think that I have a yellow streak, that I daren't take a chance in the air!"

"Oh, Joel!" The girl's cry was as a sudden stab of pain. "Never! You *know* I'd never think that of you!"

"Yes," the chief went on bitterly. "I've heard the boys talking. And you saw young Larsen at the dance last night, saw him a whole lot as a matter of fact, and

I know what he thinks. The kid don't mean bad, but he just has to talk."

The girl hung her head, and slowly, reluctantly the words came from her:

"It's—that's just it, Joe. I—I know that you could do anything that any of the others might, anything at all. But I can't bear to think that they say you're—that they say the things they do. If——"

She stammered, hesitated, and broke down.

A steady arm slipped 'round her, and the quiet voice was suddenly vibrant with comforting reassurance.

"We-ell, girlie? If what?"

"If—oh, Joe, if you'd only show—just once, dear; you'd never have to do it again."

Now Joe Rader was very much in love with this bright-eyed girl whom a wonderful Providence had sent into his life, in love after the silent intense manner of the strong man who has outgrown the first enthusiasms of youth. Youth would surely have taken extravagant oath instantly to establish unassailable position by deeds fraught with valor and foolishness. Rader never hesitated. It never occurred to him that there was any temptation to hesitate. The slow, serious smile broke out again.

"I wish I could, little girl. I wish to Heaven I could. Don't you think that it hits me hard? But—regulations! There's no margin allowed."

That was Joe Rader, Chief Petty Officer, U. S. Navy. Trained, disciplined, "completely reliable." The girl had hardly expected any more.

"Well, then, Joe dear, leave it. For my sake, Joe. Get transferred to something else. Never mind the ten per cent.; we'll only have to wait a little longer."

Again it never occurred to that direct-thinking man of single purpose that there could be any cause for hesitation.

"Girl o' mine, don't you see I can't do that? There's five thousand aviators needed by our country, needed bad—and I've got to do my bit training them."

The girl was silent for a long time. Then she uttered a long, tremulous sigh. It meant hopelessness, resignation—and perhaps just the beginnings of a deep thankfulness that this man was just as he was.

Busy, crowded days followed. Chief Rader stuck grimly to doing his bit toward that five thousand. But, in the face of

what he knew, he grew more silent and self-contained among the men; and in spite of what he knew, since it was his duty, he preached ever more insistently the gospel of unquestioning obedience to regulations. The men shrugged their shoulders and smiled, scornfully, behind his back; and young Bud Larsen shrugged his shoulders and smiled, carelessly, when occasion offered, at the wistful-eyed girl—for he was very young, and she was very beautiful.

And Chief Rader saw it all, and the irony of it bit into his soul, and he, too, smiled, sometimes, tight-lipped and grim; but his steady course of unswerving adherence to orders and of seeing that others adhered to them too never deviated for an instant. And presently another student flyer passed all the prescribed tests and qualified. And then another. And then the two officers smiled and slapped each other on the back and talked boastfully of a record for Unit E.

And then in the natural sequence of events came a day when everything went wrong; one of those days on which, in spite of all human efficiency, accident followed accident through the sheer inherent cussedness of inanimate objects, that malicious ill luck which takes ninety per cent. of the toll of lives in modern aviation.

First, an unseen flaw in the drop-forged steel of a connecting rod which had stood the pound and drive of the piston to the utmost limit finally went the way of all flaws, and the broken stem, whirling at a speed of fourteen hundred revolutions per minute, instantly smashed a hole through the crank case big enough to put one's head through and then proceeded to flail the whole engine loose from its bed.

By the grace of God the man who was up had been under an iron discipline for long enough not to lose his head. Unconsciously the memory of oft-repeated orders asserted itself and he "buttoned off" and glided with a dead engine to safety.

Of course, no human foresight could have foreseen the thing; but since hangar chiefs are for the purpose of being held responsible, and since human lives were at stake, it was a bad mark against Chief Rader.

Then one of the seventy-three listed ailments which a high-speed motor is subject to suddenly smote H-9 and she refused to develop her required power; elimination out of seventy-three troubles, most of which are obscure, takes time. In the meanwhile

Number Nine was out of commission. Another bad mark.

The third blow fell on Rader himself. There was a gusty breeze which was growing stiffer; but he had gone up in H-6, the machine with the self-starter, his pet, giving instruction to an advanced pupil in the handling of controls in "choppy" air. The difficult part, the lesson and the landing in the running sea, safely accomplished, when it came to the easy finale of planing in to the beach, a sudden side gust got under one wing, heeled the machine over till the outer wing float dipped, then immediately swung it 'round on the pivot, and the chief had to submit to the ignominy of being hauled ashore by the crew to a tail-end finish with the nose pointing out to sea.

It was a little thing in itself, but since extreme skill might have avoided it, Rader felt humiliated infinitely more than over the two previous mishaps.

The final straw came when the machinist in charge of the forty-knot *Viper*, the rescue-boat, came in with a carefully filled out report on his great Van Blerck, another of those fastidious high-speed engines. Rader forgot that he was a highly efficient machine and swore out loud just like a plain human being. He grabbed the report and strode in search of his commanding officer.

"*Viper's* out of commission, sir. The motorman reports that he'll need five or six hours to fix the trouble."

The officer bit his lip and frowned. This was a nuisance. The rescue boat, in keeping with the official program of safety, was supposed to be in instant readiness with a hospital assistant and a pulmotor on board in case there should be an accident out on the water somewhere. He looked critically up at the clouds.

"Hm! Fracto-nimbus at about eight hundred feet, with a rising gale," he muttered. Then: "All right. Better secure for the day then. Report to me at my quarters when you're through."

 RADER strode back to the hangars grumbling impatiently to himself. He hated these enforced delays. And it was visitors' day, too; and he took a pride in having something to show to the outside public who were fortunate enough to obtain passes to come in and view the practice work from within certain very strictly defined limits. Besides, it stimulated re-

cruiting; and the country was still very far short from those five thousand specimens of physical perfection who should be judged fit for this most exacting branch of the Service.

And the machine crews, though it meant a holiday for them, were not less unwilling than himself. Their spirit, as the chief maintained proudly, was right. The work of securing was proceeding with swift efficiency when a faint distant hum from overhead attracted the men's attention. Far away at a high level a black dot dipped and bucketed through the gusts and increased in size with astonishing swiftness.

"There's Bud comin' in from D," some one sang out; and the men interrupted their work to watch the flight with professional appraisal.

The fast scout "crabbed" dizzily across the air currents with a drift of at least one in seven, but even so the judgment was perfect. Directly above the station it made a sudden steep bank and turned into the wind. There it seemed to hover on an even keel for appreciable seconds; then it dipped slowly over and swooped down like some immense eagle in an almost perpendicular nose dive.

Straight down, out of sight behind Number One hangar the dive continued, and the newer hands felt a sudden intake of the breath. But there came no disastrous crash from the landing field behind the building. The machine must have flattened out within a few feet of the ground, and against that wind there could have been but a very short landing run, for in a few minutes the reckless pilot came 'round the corner pushing the goggles up from his eyes and grinning frankly pleased with himself.

"Well, fellers," he chuckled. "Some li'l dip, no, yes? How's the world this bright day? What's doin'? Why ain't the sky full o' machines?"

"Old Safe-an'-Sane has passed the order to secure. *Viper's* on the fritz; an' it's too windy anyway."

"Windyl!" the boy scorned at once. "What's the matter with yuh Navy aviators? Didn't cha see me jes now? This ain't but a pleasant breeze!"

"Aw, lay off o' that 'Navy aviators' stuff," growled a tormented flyer. "We got orders, 's all there is to it. 'Sides, you can't monkey with a hydro, with all its extra pontoon weight an' all that head

resistance, same's you can with your high-powered land scout."

"Can't yuh?" the boy teased, "mebbe yuh amatoors can't. But I'd show yuh. I tell yuh I'm a regular——"

"Come ahead there! Lively with those machines!" Rader's authoritative roar from the hangar door broke in on the group.

"Comin' away!" shouted the men, and put their shoulders to the trucks.

The boy was left standing alone, disappointed in his delightful game of provocation. He was bubbling over with the exhilaration of his recent really clever flight. His spirits needed an outlet. There was a little group of outsiders over there. To him they represented the general public. Exhibition was more than his second nature.

The adulation of the mob was meat and drink to him, the only real compensation for his reckless daring. Particularly, moreover, there stood that peachy girl who showed such a perverse preference for the steady, unspectacular hangar chief. For the moment he was quite unnoticed. The irrepressible spirit of lawlessness came out and danced behind his eyes.

The first that the hangar men knew was the sudden unmistakable *bl-l-ipp bl-l-ipp* which a Christensen self-starter makes as it fires the cylinders with its equally unmistakable trail of blue gas smoke, and as they started up to look H-6 glided smoothly from the beach; and almost immediately the great elevating rudders flapped down and up and down again, "porpoising" to lift the pontoon to its planing angle at which it would skim over the water and gather the necessary speed to enable it to rise.

A startled yell of "Hey, the kid's gone off with Number Six!" brought every man to the doors of the hangars. Chief Rader looked helplessly after the receding machine for a choking minute. Then:

"Blast the boy!" he swore. "Orders were to secure, and regulations say that after that order not even a tool truck is to stay out! He'll have to go on report; that's all there is to it."

But Bud Larsen was long past hearing or caring for hangar chiefs. He headed the machine into the wind and lifted her with beautiful skill. Against that wind he climbed at a startling angle for such a low-powered machine.

"Golly, he'll stall her an' tail slide!" gasped a novice.

But the young dare-devil seemed to judge with uncanny accuracy just how much lift the wind would give and how much strain the engine would stand. He climbed steadily up and out over the water till he reached a safe exhibition level of about fifteen hundred feet, while the whole station stood and watched. There he turned on a giddy bank and shot suddenly away with the wind at a terrific speed as if shot from a gun. His speed indicator whirled well up over the hundred mark.

Again he turned and battled against the air, fluttering and dipping like a leaf. He was a good mile from shore now. At that distance he seemed to crawl. When he was abreast of the station again there ensued the most amazing series of stunts. The machine dived and dipped and went off on the wing just like any light exhibition plane.

Then presently the watchers saw the nose dip slightly to gather speed and then turn sharply upward. Up it climbed into the perpendicular, and then the speed fell off and it slipped back on its tail and down. A gasp came from the outsiders who looked on. But the cool-headed flyer never faltered. He caught up his machine again out of its dangerous position within a hundred feet; and again he tried the crazy stunt, and again.

"Phew! The looney nut's tryin' to loop!" muttered the professionals from the hangars.

"He'll never do it with all that pontoon weight."

"Nope. Too much wind on the rise. He'll bust his neck sure."

Their attitude was remarkable for its lack of any extreme enthusiasm and its cool, almost impersonal appraisal of the chances of sudden death. Not that they were callous, any of them; but this was their own job. These men who took their own lives up into the air every other day or so had grown away from a display of most of the human emotions.



THE lunatic up in the sky grew tired of his ineffectual attempts to achieve the spectacular impossible. He began to circle downward in a wide spiral. It looked as though he had decided to come down at last and face the wrath which awaited him. But Bud Larsen was

in blissful, delirious enjoyment of pitting his skill against the clawing hand of Fate. Steeper he banked his spiral, and steeper, and the circle became correspondingly less and less till he was hurtling 'round at an angle of sixty degrees.

"Corkscrewing, by golly!"

"And in a gale!"

"Holy snakes, but that kid can fly."

Yet steeper became the angle and the circle narrowed down to a few feet, till suddenly the machine was whirling 'round on its own nose as a pivot and swiftly downwards.

The outsiders just gazed in wonder. But this time it was from the hangars that a shout of dismay came.

"By God, he's gone into a nose spin!"

"Right over the rock too," piped the high treble of an excited novice.

"Done for, by golly! Look, look!"

By this time even the outsiders behind the restricting line realized that something was suddenly very wrong. A nose spin is the most deadly thing known to modern aviation. No skill may avail to bring the machine out of that terrible vortex. Sheer luck and a chance side gust may do it sometimes; but the aviator can do nothing but pull all his controls at once and pray for something to get a hold on the air. Bud Larsen never lost his head. He worked everything movable in the pilot's seat; but his luck had been overworked. It was played out.

In a few more seconds the spinning plane crashed into the sea, missing Domino Rock by inches only. Even so, "crashed," is the proper word to use; for water, as every hydro flyer says, "is terrible hard stuff to hit if you hit it hard enough." The machine crumpled into a shapeless mess just as if it had hit hard earth. For a few seconds the wreck was just a smother of foam in the high-running sea, and then a dark object seemed to detach itself from the ruin and float helplessly, visible at intervals on the wave crests.

Already a man had snatched the eight-power prism binoculars from the signal locker.

"I got him!" he yelled. "There! There again! He's made the edge o' the rock! But he don't move. He just lays. He's gone again! No he ain't. I see him. But he'll be swept off by them seas surer'n thunder!"

"Get a jump with the speed boat!" shouted an excited voice.

But the rescue boat's disablement had been the very reason of the order to secure.

"—! The motor dory!"

But this was a matter where minutes counted. Every now and then a great sea broke over the ledge and the onlookers gasped. The motor dory would take half an hour to buck those seas for a mile. Aimless orders and futile advice began to fly back and forth, the usual trouble with the enlisted man when the accustomed voice of authority is absent. Instinctively they began to look for their leader.

But authority was just then behind Number One hangar, tugging frantically at one wing of the scout machine to maneuver it into a favorable position.

An urgent hand fell on his arm, and his girl stood before him, breathless, with frightened eyes.

"Joe! What are you going to do?"

The hangar chief looked at her vaguely.

"I don't know," he muttered. "Orders was for no flying; but—gimme a hand with this wing!"

"Joe, stop! You can't go out there. It's—it's impossible!"

"I know, girl; but—thank Almighty Pete he had a self-starter fitted!"

He was climbing into the pilot's seat. Suddenly he sprang back to the ground. He snatched the girl to him and kissed her swiftly. The snappy incisiveness of his voice yearned with a great tenderness.

"Good-by, girl o' mine—in case——"

The next instant the roar of the great engine filled the air and drowned out the excited cries from the front of the hangar.

With the strong gale against it, the machine rose off the ground within fifty feet and broke into view 'round the corner of the hangar skimming low and rocking dizzily as the ailerons caught the balance on one side or the other.

"It's the chief!" yelled an amazed voice, as the bare head, minus helmet or goggles, with hair flying wild and the hard, set face staring straight ahead was visible for a moment above the edge of the fuselage.

"Safe-an'-Sane! What'dja know about that!"

"Golly! He's crazy too! But he's got the guts all right."

"There's two machines gone in the same day."



AND while they watched with keen faces, with only a nervous twitch here and there to betray their excitement, and discussed breathlessly his infinitesimal chances of success, the grim man in the hurtling machine headed straight out for the rock and muttered to himself—
 "Thank Pete the wind's dead right."

And by the mercy of Providence it was. The long slab of rock lay due north and south, and the wind blew from the north. Otherwise that fractional chance would have been entirely outside of human possibility. As it was, the side wind carried the machine just far enough off from the southerly end of the rock to allow for maneuvering. Right opposite this end the watchers saw it bank sharply and head into the gale, which immediately cut its speed down by a full two-thirds.

Here again it seemed that luck was repenting; for low landing speed meant a short run, and that mean, lean rock was none too long. Flying so low that the hungry wave crests seemed to reach out and snatch at the landing wheels, the machine had to dip but a couple of feet before it lit on that slippery thirty-foot space with beautiful precision. A gasp of relief went up from the hangar crews.

"Thank Pete!" Rader muttered again through set teeth.

The next instant, watching his time like a hawk, he heaved the elevating control back on to his chest. —There was just enough speed left, helped by the lift of the head wind, to impart a little jump to the machine. Just over that deadly step. It was a miracle of timing. In another second the machine came to a stop. Rader flung himself out and raced back to the inert figure, washed every minute by a hungry wave. It opened one eye at him.

"Nifty flying, Chief," the boy murmured with a game attempt at his pose of recklessness. "I saw yuh all the way. Couldn't a done better myself."

"You're going on report, son, for disobeying regulations," was all that Chief Petty

Officer Rader growled in a gruff monotone.

"All right, Chief; I ain't kickin'. I—I guess you're a regular flyer though." The voice trailed away and the eye closed weakly.

"—— fool!" growled Rader.

And he picked up the limp form with tender care and ran with it to the quivering machine. He tucked it into the front seat, and then jumped down and strained with all his strength to push the machine back as far as the step, for he would need all the run he could get. Again the good gale helped him. Helped him to maneuver the machine back into place. Helped him to rise clear well within the sixty feet or so of run thus gained.

The rest was "straight flying." In a few more minutes the speed scout landed for the second time that day behind Number One hangar. Two hospital orderlies were already there with a stretcher. Rader's eye lit with approval. Efficiency! His own training! He climbed nimbly from his seat.

"Jump, you fellows," he ordered crisply. "And be gentle with the kid."

The men crowded 'round him and fought with one another to grip him by the hand, hard.

"Safe-an'-Sane, me eye. Unsafe an' insane," was the catchword.

But Chief Petty Officer Rader was troubled with matters of infinitely greater importance than congratulations. He pushed through the enthusiastic mob and strode to where the wondering girl stood, wild-eyed and tremulous.

"Oh, Joe! You shouldn't have done it!" she sobbed. "I never really meant what I said. You shouldn't have done it."

Then that "completely reliable" and most obtuse of men slipped a comforting arm 'round her and, strong in his knowledge of rectitude, said simply:

"Oh, that was all right, girly. Regulations say that 'in case of emergency, in the absence of officers, the senior petty officer will take command.' So I was duly authorized to act."



The White Moths of Vizgayan

by Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "Guilty," "The Way of the Strong," etc.

THE two people Lieutenant Harding had been curious about the twenty-four hours since he had landed on Vizgayan, he saw now ahead of him. It must be they, since they were only white civilians on the island. And he lengthened his springy stride to catch up with them.

The couple were following a lonely jungle path, separated from the *barrio* on the left by a marshy brake. Ahead the blue water of the bay lay under the westering sun still as a mirror. Inshore its surface was broken by a mysterious-appearing system of fishing stakes, like half-submerged bamboo fences; farther out by a group of barren islets suggesting the ruins of old-time towers and castles. From the middle of the jutting point toward which the path tended, a black promontory thrust its bulk upward a hundred feet against the vividly colored evening sky.

Lieutenant Harding eyed this promontory with interest. It was evidently the chambered rock in which the natives worshipped, the sacred Temple of a Thousand Eyes. A temple forbidden by the *balians*, according to Sergeant Stebbins, even to the natives themselves, save on certain authorized occasions. And Harding hoped, with commendable reluctance to be a spoil-sport, that the couple hadn't planned to visit it.

Harding was a young and normally gregarious man, and he saw a lonely time ahead of him; but it wasn't incipient masculine jealousy that caused him to frown in troubled fashion when he saw how close the two walked together. That, too, was because of something Sergeant Stebbins had

said—and yet he really had said nothing outright. But the honest old sergeant hadn't been able to keep his opinion of the visiting trader entirely out of his voice, and Harding had known him a long time and valued his judgment.

The man's powerful-looking hand rested on the girl's arm. Beside his thick, square figure she appeared almost too slender. But any suggestion of fragility was offset by the freedom of her step, the carriage of her shoulders, the backward fling of her head. She walked as if she were alive, alive to her finger-tips; and Harding presently caught himself observing the lithe swing of the khaki-clad figure with very great approval.

He drew rapidly closer. He was about to hail them, when a startling and rather perplexing thing happened.

The couple stopped suddenly, dead in their tracks. They stood rigidly motionless, as though Death were leaping at them and they didn't know which way to dodge. Their shoulders were hunched away from the brake on their left, and their faces were turned tensely toward it.

Then the man jerked the girl sideways, and urged her through the knee-deep cogon-grass in what seemed a brainless panic. Brainless indeed, thought Harding, observing the fact that the girl's body was thus kept between the man and whatever danger they were running from.

By the time Harding had sprinted to the spot and fruitlessly scanned the brake, revolver in hand, the couple had halted and were staring back at him in evident amazement. Amazement which, strangely enough,

seemed to become mingled as he advanced toward them with annoyance and suspicion at the suddenness of his appearance, and even—he could have sworn—with unexplainable fear of him.

As he inquired what was the matter, he thought he observed the man touch the girl's hand warningly.

"Lieutenant Harding, I presume?" questioned the man smoothly. "We heard you'd arrived, of course. This is Miss Bryant, the school-teacher, and my name is Mowitt. You've probably seen my boat in the lagoon. It was nothing at all. We thought we heard a rustling in the brush, and the natives are so unreliable. Miss Bryant's nerves, and my own too, I'm afraid, are getting a bit jumpy. You of the military seem to keep keyed up to this sort of thing."

The last sounded like an attempt at flattery, through which broke a sneer.

"It's our business, of course," Harding replied shortly.

He disliked to be lied to; and the general appearance of this man, with the heavy, blue-black jowl, small covetous mouth, unsteady dark eyes, and overwhelming bulk, was not prepossessing.

"But that there's any danger here—I was given to understand quite the contrary. The natives are friendly."

"Do you think so?" asked Mowitt, with a shrewd glance. "They were, perhaps. But now?"

"I haven't been here long enough to form an opinion," replied Harding, with uncharacteristic lack of frankness.

"Now that we've met so fortunately," suggested the girl, speaking for the first time in a quick, rather imperious voice, "suppose we walk back to the *barrio*, unless you were going farther, Lieutenant."

Harding agreed readily, and the three started to retrace their steps, with the lieutenant shooting sideways glances at the girl's face.

His opinion of Mowitt was sure—gross selfishness seemed marked across the man's face like a scar—but the girl puzzled him. She was not beautiful. She had dark, irregular features and coal-black hair, and eyes in which seemed to smolder a habitual expression of hunger, of discontent, of fierce, half-sullen impatience. She carried herself with startling grace, like a wild thing; and yet her movements were clipped

and confined, as though she had hard work to restrain the life that was in her.

She appeared as well suited to the monotonous and sometimes seemingly hopeless grind of an island school-teacher as a falcon to a rookery. It was just after the days of the empire, and Harding could understand how, having once reached Manila, she might easily have been assigned by zealous but inexperienced civilian officials to Vizgayan. But, in the name of sound judgment, why had she come at all? And in what *contretemps* would her presence in this lonely outpost end?

Harding did not return to his companions' seemingly causeless fright.

"Then you think the natives have changed," he remarked after a moment. "Have you any idea why?"

"Why, yes."

In Mowitt's instant irritation his voice struck its first note of truth.

"It's their infernal superstition—and these moths."

"I've noticed quite a few moths," replied Harding carelessly.

He glanced at one, pure white and as large as a butterfly, as it drifted through the air past their heads.

"My sergeant showed unaccountable nervousness when one lit on him last night on the way in from the *lorcha*. And I understand the natives have some curious belief about them. But is their number unusual, and how does it concern us?"

"Well, as to their number, there wasn't one here two weeks ago," said the girl. "That is, not one like these. And the natives say this is the first time they've come to the island since the fall of the friars. Before that, they appeared when the Moros were driven off, and before that with the attack of the Samal pirates. So they naturally connect their appearance with the coming of trouble. And," with an attempt at a careless grimace, "this time we are the trouble."

"It's strange," said Harding, who had heard exactly the same thing from Sergeant Stebbins, "but not unexplainable. They're probably indigenous to some of the other islands, maybe to Panay, and get blown over here once in a lifetime by a high wind. Why they don't survive is a problem for naturalists. All we've got to do is to let them alone. Did you say you were living on the island or on your ship, Mr. Mowitt?"

Mowitt, it appeared, would live nowhere but on his ship. And he went on to speak of her good qualities with emphasis, letting it be known inferentially that he owned her, and that he had accumulated wealth by years of island trading. But of the purpose of his stay at Vizgayan he said nothing.

He seemed not unwilling to have it understood that it had to do with the presence there of the girl, whom he addressed familiarly as Hester. And she, to Harding's wonder, accepted the intimation.

The trail curved around the end of the underbrush and into the *barrio*, which the trio reached just as the hot sun sank below the horizon.



IT WAS the hour of the evening meal, but it seemed to Harding ominously quiet.

The space beneath each grass-thatched bamboo shack was crowded with natives dimly visible in the dusk; men, women and children clustered around their bowls of rice and platters of fish. There was a great smell of smoke and cookery in the air; and from a certain distance before and behind the white people came a low-toned guttural chattering.

But it was a secretive and distrustful chattering, that died off into silence as they approached it. They could feel themselves observed, spied upon, so that they too, without knowing it, fell silent. It was as though they walked through a lair of watchful, hostile eyes, of furtively listening ears.

Also they walked under a palpitating canopy of white. For the moths were by now beginning their nightly dance, thick as a locust swarm, noiselessly as bits of white paper drifting in an impalpable and ever-changing breeze.

Airily, aimlessly, they flitted about in the darkness, whirled and circled, rose toward the zenith and down again, like immense snowflakes that never descended, like disembodied spirits in their filmy lightness.

Harding and the girl observed the phenomenon without comment, but Mowitt fumed angrily under his breath. Nevertheless it was a relief to the three of them when their walk ended.

Harding left the other two at the door of Miss Bryant's bungalow, which stood at the extreme seaward end of the street, and within fifty yards of his encampment. There

were two straight rows of twelve tents each, with his own tent set across the nearer end. Before opening the flap of his tent, Harding called out a summons to Sergeant Stebbins.

Stebbins had had charge of the detachment a month, the officer preceding Harding having been invalidated suddenly to Canacao; and there was much routine information Harding needed to take command. But this Harding passed over swiftly. He went on to matters that he considered more vital.

An hour later he summed up thoughtfully.

"Then," he said, "you think that the natives actually believe this ridiculous story about the moths?"

"You see the way they act, sir."

"Yes, that's true. And Mowitt. Except for the fact that he's been here two weeks, that he mixes a great deal with the natives, that you suspect he's plying some of the old men with liquor and that the natives generally seem very suspicious of him, you know nothing about him?"

"No, sir."

"Stebbins," said Harding after a pause, "I don't like it."

"No more do I, sir," replied Stebbins.

"And I'm worried about the natives. Miss Bryant tells me that her school attendance has fallen off half the last week. That's bad, too."

Stebbins said nothing.

"Well," concluded Harding, "there's nothing we can do just now except be careful. You know the headquarters policy—we're to pay no attention to any offense on the part of the natives that stops short of actual violence."

"And there's a quick trip to Manila and a summary court for any man that harms a moth intentionally. We're here for three purposes, to protect the school, to map the island, and to make friends. That order about the moths sounds foolish, though, doesn't it, Stebbins? Well, good night."

Left alone, Harding let his mind drift back to certain phrases in the final verbal instructions he had had from his brigade commander in Manila.

"Rumors of pearls there, nothing definite. Too far north for native pearls. But the friars were there a long time—trade with Mexico and the Southern Islands—Vizgayan a sort of center. Friars wiped out completely in a revolt of the natives, and the old native religion reinstated. Might

be they got hold of something. Anyway, no looting, no meddling, hands off."

"H-m!" grunted Harding as, having got into pajamas, he blew out the candle and retreated hastily under the mosquito-net of his cot, "I wonder if Mowitt—now he might have heard something—and what the devil scared those two people, that they had to lie to me about it?"



A WEEK later Harding's perplexities had considerably increased.

In the first place there was the killing in the village, which took place some time during the night that followed Harding's meeting with Mowitt. A wrinkled ex-presidente, fallen with age into a solitary, hermit-like existence, had been found dead on his pandanus sleeping-mat. He had been stabbed twice from below through the interstices in the bamboo floor.

It was a cowardly crime, and an apparently wanton one. Old Maurarato had nothing to steal, and who could have wished the harmless, half-doddering man ill? But Harding started when Sergeant Stebbins mentioned, as though casually, that Maurarato had been the man whom Mowitt had plied most lavishly with whisky.

Concerning this practise of Mowitt's, Harding's duty was clear. The next time he saw Mowitt he forbade absolutely the bringing ashore of any more liquor. Mowitt acquiesced with a cheerful readiness that surprised Harding, and made him feel that Mowitt's purpose in corrupting the natives, if he had any, had already been fulfilled.

Harding found himself wishing that Mowitt hadn't agreed so easily. It surprised him how swiftly his dislike for the man deepened into cold hatred, a throbbing hatred that strained for expression.

Not until the meeting on the cliff would Harding have admitted that this feeling had anything to do with the girl. Harding's youth hadn't been an easy one; he had accustomed himself to the idea of femininity as a necessary part of life, but a part which, for him, was bound vaguely in the future.

But, he thought, the loneliness of their position demanded in mere courtesy that he pay some attention to Hester Bryant.

So he visited her school, a ramshackle building which had outlived its usefulness as a rice storehouse. He listened as she strove none too patiently to reach the comprehension of a dozen half-naked brown

urchins—all that remained of her school—through what few Tagalog and English words they had in common. He met her once on her way home, he overtook her once on a walk, he gained a grudgingly given permission to call at her bungalow, where she lived alone save for her native maid.

And he found himself puzzling and worrying over her. Not merely because she rebuffed him, though that was obvious. Their talk was bounded by conventionalities; every approach to her real self was walled up. It was exasperating, for she always seemed to lie so flamingly and alluringly alive beyond the barrier.

Exasperating, but not alarming. The alarming feature was that this barrier seemed not at all a natural one. It seemed to be always deliberately and purposefully set up by her, as though to hide something. Her attitude was secretive rather than guarded. Her hostility—for it came to that—appeared to be forced. Harding tried hard not to feel that she was trying to create an animus in order to justify herself in some hidden and wrong intention.

One Sunday afternoon Harding went for a long walk. After an hour of hard hiking along the broken coast-line to the north, he rounded a great boulder and came unexpectedly upon Hester Bryant.

Standing on the very edge of a cliff that dropped sheer two hundred feet to the sea, she was gazing straight out into vacancy. Never had he seen her mobile face crossed with so many lines of fierce rebellion. So perilous was her position, so unconscious did she seem of everything about her, and so frantically did the wind whip her garments and tear at her, that a startled and incautious exclamation broke from Harding before he thought.

She whirled instantly, curled her lips, and the glow of her eyes became a flame.

"You have been following me, Lieutenant Harding," she declared tensely. "Is that your idea of gallantry? May I ask by what right—"

Coupled with her previous behavior, the unjust accusation was a little too much for Harding's patience.

"I give you my word, Miss Bryant, that our meeting is merely an unfortunate accident. You'll excuse me, I'm sure."

He was passing on with his youthful head held high, but he wasn't sorry to hear a changed voice behind him.

"Wait!"

"That was discourteous of me," she said as he turned. "I'm sure that you—shall we walk back together?"

"I'd rather stop here a while," Harding returned, still smarting a little. "Won't you be seated?" indicating a convenient rock. "Do," in a voice that was less urgent than commanding. "I've a question to put to you. Now, Miss Bryant, this is probably unconventional, but I'm going to ask you what's the meaning of your attitude toward me? Why don't you accept me in the character of a gentleman?"

Her eyes wavered away from his with a look in which Harding thought he read sudden and deep distress. But when they came back they were steely. Harding waited in suspense for her reply, hoping she wouldn't equivocate.

"And if I refuse to answer?"

"Then I'll assume you've a better reason for your refusal than for your attitude."

"I admit it," she replied. "I'm not free."

"Not free!" Harding rasped with involuntary anger, as he thought of Mowitt.

"Not free to answer you," she amplified.

"Except to say that I'm not free to be your friend."

"What on earth do you mean, Miss Bryant?" asked Harding more evenly.



THEN of a sudden Hester Bryant's forced composure seemed to give way, and she flared out in a strange mixture of passionate anger and complaint and regret.

"You'll understand soon enough. But I'm going to ask you something. Do you know what it is not to be free? Do you know what it is to be cramped, stifled, pent in, from your earliest memory on? Buried in a deadly country village, a moribund town from which every one that can get away goes—every one of spirit—leaving the rest behind to stagnate? And then when your chance comes—you think it's a chance—to come to this!"

"My dear Miss Bryant——"

"Oh, don't apologize, and I don't want sympathy. But if you had gone through this, if you were as you see I am, wanting, wanting—oh, I don't know what, the kingdoms of the earth, maybe, but I think it's only freedom—and then you were offered another chance, a sure one this time, a chance to put poverty once and for

all behind you—wouldn't you take it?"

"Not if it cost me—" began Harding.

"Don't answer. You can't because you don't know. And please don't ever refer to this again. You'll want to, I know, but don't. You can't change me. I don't know why I've told you. Yes, I do," she flashed out the truth defiantly, "I don't want you to think too ill of me. And yet we can't be friends—we can't. I——"

Suddenly she dropped her head with almost a sob. But when she looked up again her face had gone whitely calm.

"And now, Lieutenant," she said formally, "shall we start back?"

She maintained that tone all the way home. But she could not put up the bars to thought. There seems this about human intimacy, that there is no going back. The tendrils of understanding and sympathy, once put forth, may be broken but never untwined. Harding had this to console him; they would never be strangers again.

Thereafter they met less often than before, and she held him outwardly at a greater distance. But always the knowledge lay between them that Harding had been given a glimpse into the secret places of her soul. Perhaps that knowledge drew them imperceptibly together. Perhaps the cold rule that Hester laid upon them was as hard for her to endure as for Harding. Sometimes he thought he surprised a rebellious warmth in her eyes, a softness as of heaven. Then it was gone, like a Spring day ice-sheeted.

She was living under a strain, as though she forced herself to do a thing she detested. And Mowitt was with her constantly. When Harding saw them together—the free-limbed girl with the dark, wild face that had suddenly grown so dear to him, and the brutal hulk of a man with the cowardly eyes—he felt like laughing with horrible irony as at a devil's jest. She wanted to be free. She thought she would be free. And she was going to marry Mowitt!

Mowitt. Harding wondered if it was merely jealous hatred on his part that made it seem as though that man's maleficent personality lay somehow behind each one of the problems that so vexed him.

The natives were daily growing more troublesome. Their suspicion of the whites was being translated into active dislike. Even Harding could not walk through the *barrio* without being assailed with jeers

and threats far-flung from shuttered windows. And his men, hazed and jostled openly, complained that their patience was misinterpreted as cowardice. Any moment one man's act might fire all this dry tinder, and all the Government's plans for future helpfulness go up in smoke of battle.

The moths, from whose white and innocent wings this senseless hatred seemed by some evil alchemy to have been distilled, increased in numbers, until at night they veiled the starlight like a curtain.

And the problematic pearls! Harding didn't mention them even to Stebbins; but he interrelated them vaguely with the other mysteries. If, as he suspected, the report of their existence had been primarily the motive that had brought Mowitt to the island, if part, at least, of Mowitt's activities had been directed to getting information of them, if fear of their loss lay behind the distrust and enmity of the natives, if indeed the moths had come to Vizgayan as a warning. . . . But that last was nonsense, of course.

What rites went on within that strange Temple of the Thousand Eyes? He wished he knew. But he only knew that the natives now repaired to it daily after their midday siesta, and always came back from it more threateningly sullen. At other times, he was told, it was guarded only by an idea, an apparently well-founded belief that whoever passed its door without authority would never come out alive.

But wherever Harding entered the mystic maze of conjecture, he always found his way at last to that dark chamber of brooding wherein dwelt his image of the girl he loved and the man he hated passing down the years together. Down, in the case of Hester Bryant. Down indeed!



THE antagonism of the natives toward white men was by no means confined to the soldiers. Mowitt they seemed to hate and distrust even more deeply. And one evening he was chased out of the village in fear of his life.

He killed a moth. He had come out of Hester Bryant's bungalow just at dusk, and started on his usual way toward the rickety *suali* wharf. The air was full of the fluttering things. One of them lit on his face. He must have forgotten himself in irritation at its glaucous touch, for he reached angrily

hand and flung it crushed to the ground.

Within a minute the natives, blocking the street, had forced him into the underbrush, and were running him toward the lagoon. Hastily flung bolos missed him by a miracle. Harding, informed by a sentry what had happened, took eight men and followed the pursuit. But before he caught up with the natives he saw a *banca*, in which Mowitt's herculean form was plainly recognizable, driving out from the shore toward the trading-ship. Mowitt must have had the boat hidden there for just some such emergency.

Harding took his men back to camp, doubled the sentries for the night, and ordered the rest of the men to sleep in their clothing and under arms. Then he went to Hester Bryant's bungalow to try—as he had tried before—to persuade her of her danger and to get her to move for the night into a tent in the encampment.

But again she refused, although she had seen Mowitt's flight.

"The natives haven't changed toward me," she argued.

"But they have," Harding contradicted. "You haven't a pupil left, for one thing. And your maid has deserted you. You're alone here. I might post sentries around your bungalow, I suppose, but——"

"I won't permit that," she said sharply.

"But I can't——"

"Thank you, Lieutenant, but you must let me have my own way. I won't be indebted to you No, not that, but—I've my reasons. Promise me you won't post sentries."

"Not if you object, of course," replied Harding.

"Well, then, goodnight!"

Harding had no choice but to bow and withdraw. But Hester's voice had broken a little in that dismissal.

Harding went back to his tent, but he couldn't stay there. He had no knowledge of how far Mowitt's careless action had gone to enrage the natives. They might attack that night. By sheer force of numbers his little detachment might be overwhelmed. But that was a chance a soldier took, and it wasn't what worried Harding most.

What of the woman without the lines?

Her perversity angered him; her danger appalled him. He should never have made her that promise about posting sentries.

He should post them anyway, with or without her consent. He saw that now.

So an hour later found Harding himself, with only Stebbins notified of his intentions, lying in the thick grass behind Hester Bryant's bungalow, prepared for a lonely watch until morning.

The moths fluttered overhead, now and then a light wing brushed his face, the *barrio* beyond was full of a low droning—and the hours passed. Hours in which Harding's mind, nervously active, raced back over every circumstance of his brief stay on Vizgayan, recalled Hester Bryant's every word and look, and pictured again and again in the darkness the meanness of Mowitt's face.

The more he contemplated Hester's seeking happiness through Mowitt, the more incredible did it seem that she should so befool herself. He racked his brain for another explanation of her conduct.

Still he kept vigilantly alert. Well past midnight, long after the *barrio* had quieted into silence, he heard the sound of cautious movements within the bungalow.

Presently the bamboo door creaked open, then closed again. Some one was descending the ladder-like steps. With utter amazement Harding, rounding the house on his toe-tips, saw Hester Bryant stealing across the street.

Her khaki garments blended swiftly into the darkness. But her light footsteps and the rustling of her skirt betrayed her course. Swinging clear of a sentry's possible challenge, she passed beyond the *barrio*, and into the bordering brake.

Harding followed.

Five minutes later the two—with only the moths whirling over them as eery witnesses of what was to be—were passing down the path on which they had first met, the well-worn jungle path that led to the Temple of a Thousand Eyes, and to the sea.

 THE entrance to the temple was about the size of an ordinary doorway, hewed, as it seemed, with Broddingnagian chisels straight into the solid rock. Harding stood just without that doorway, searching the blackness into which Hester Bryant had disappeared. He could see nothing.

The washing of the waves against the outer end of the rock filled the cavern with an abrupt, mysterious clamor. But through

this clamor Harding heard a queer, irregular grating, a labored creaking and groaning as of something heavy being shoved over the stone floor.

Harding, in a numbing confusion of perplexity and fear, slipped past the entrance. The rock walls of the place fell abruptly away on either side. He stole forward in the velvet darkness toward that intermittent crunching and sliding. Presently he distinguished also the sound of heavy breathing, of scraping feet, of labored effort on the part of more than one.

Who was that other person? Harding divined the answer, and with something close to hate in his heart pressed forward less cautiously. But just then he was vouchsafed other knowledge.

A thin pencil of light struck through the black air—an electric flashlight held by some one invisible. Hester Bryant's eager profile flashed out of the darkness. Then the ray traveled to its objective—a huge wooden image, grotesquely shaped and featured, seated on a sort of throne, which rested on a square wooden base.

This image, the replica of which Harding had seen many times before in the Southern Islands, stood askew and shoved up against another lesser one.

The light traveled over the image downward. Then Harding saw why the idol had been moved. Where it had stood there was a rectangular opening in the floor, extending outward about ten feet from the back wall of the temple.

The flashlight dropped lower. Whoever held it seemed to bend over the hole and play the ray back and forth. Then came a sharp cry like a bark of exultation —

"By —, I see 'em!"

And with that cry the hand holding the light came to the floor, and Harding caught a fleeting glimpse of Mowitt as he swung down into the hole.

By the sound of her movements Harding knew that Hester followed Mowitt swiftly.

Now alone on the floor of the temple, Harding moved silently toward the dim radiance which outlined the top of the hole. But as he neared it, he saw with utter amazement that this radiance was being cut off. It was being eclipsed by an opaque something that was moving swiftly and silently out from the wall of the temple.

For a moment Harding paused bewilderedly. Unexpected things had crowded

upon each other; he was still stunned with the shock of the discovery of Hester's rendezvous with Mowitt; he was still groping for the meaning of Mowitt's abrupt disappearance. This last marvel wiped his mind clean of coherent thought.

Then he realized that Hester was being trapped, and with a loud yell he leaped forward and began clawing at the solid wooden lid that was shooting to its place over the opening.

He got a hold on the front of it, but could not even check its movement. He saw it was made of double planking, mortised together solidly. He saw it ran in tight grooves, and that another groove was prepared to receive its end. In an instant the hole would be sealed like a coffin.

From below came frightened cries, but nothing else.

Desperately seeking a position of vantage, solid backing and a firm hold, Harding squirmed around and slipped chest-deep into the hole. He straightened his arms against the advancing menace, but they were doubled back as though they were putty. Irresistibly the lid came on, it touched his chest, and he felt himself about to be crushed.

He struggled to lift himself, could not, and then thrust himself frantically downward. His head barely cleared the aperture. As he dropped with a thud upon solid stone bottom, the front of the planking jammed hard into its socket.

He blinked as a wavering beam of light struck his eyes. Mowitt was standing just in front of him, Hester a little behind Mowitt. Both had fallen into an amazed and fearful silence. Where Harding stood the space was little wider than a man's body, and it seemed to narrow toward the other end.

Harding made an effort to collect his scattered senses. What was this place, why were they there; what was to be done? Then he happened to move his foot. It touched something, and he bent over to examine his find. It answered two of his questions.

It was a bamboo basket, half filled with globular things that shone softly and beautifully even in the dim reflected rays of the flashlight.

"The pearls!" said Harding to himself. "The thousand eyes! So that was part of Mowitt's lure."

He straightened up, with a sense of having gotten a grip on himself, and eyed the other coolly.

"Well, you've found them," he observed. "Now what are you going to do?"

Hester drew a sharp breath of dismay. Harding knew that she understood his question. But Mowitt's mercenary soul had befogged his mind. He replied crookedly and nervously.

"We were going to tell you, Lieutenant. There's plenty enough for three. They're genuine *strombus gigas*, all of them. They'll make us all rich."

"I'm an American officer, Mowitt," Harding made sufficient reply to the offer. "But I wasn't thinking of the pearls. When the natives find us here in the morning—"

He paused suggestively.

The flashlight in Mowitt's hand shook.

"Find us here?" he quavered. "They won't. There's hours—"

"Do you know what's happened?"

Swiftly Harding told them.

"Your weight on the floor here sprang the trap. These walls are solid rock. Up there is double hardwood planking. How are we going to get out?"

"Can we live long enough to try?" he cried suddenly.

There followed a little silence, broken only by the already labored breathing of the three, and by a near-by muffled pounding of water, like the beating of the heart of the world. A silence in which the very spirit of mortal fear seemed to enter into that sepulchral place.

But over that fear Hester seemed somehow to triumph. Her voice was steady as she asked—

"You mean—the air?"

"Exactly," replied Harding crisply. "This trap wasn't built for escape. Notice our breathing already. But let's have a look around."



THE ray of the flashlight quivered erratically as Mowitt threw it over the walls of their prison. Solid walls on three sides, damp stone surfaces. The light flashed over the outer, seaward wall a moment.

"Stop!" cried Harding suddenly. "Hold it. What's this?"

Alternately, for the space was not large enough for more than one, they crowded

forward to examine his find. It was a thin crevice in the wall, barely six inches long, through which a knife-blade could hardly have been passed. Looking through it, one saw nothing but blackness. But immediately in front of it the air was appreciably cooler and fresher.

They backed away from it with the knowledge of a situation complexed beyond words. Already their breathing was like a chorus of sobs, and the place seemed filled with the vapor of death.

"There's life there for one," said Harding hoarsely. "Only one. There's no draft, and that one will have to suck air through the hole. If we take turns we'll all weaken so we can't stand up to it."

"It's the woman, of course—" said Mowitt, in a thick and quavering voice.

"I'm glad—" Harding began with relief.

He was interrupted by Mowitt's swift movement as he snatched the revolver from Harding's holster and backed to the wall.

"That's to die," concluded Mowitt in a hard voice with a flicker of triumph in it.

"She wouldn't want to be found here by the natives, would she? And she hasn't a chance to get out. Now one of us—there's a chance between us. And I'll take that chance."

"But, good God, Mowitt," cried Harding incredulously. "You can't mean —"

Mowitt had deliberately turned his broad back, and wedged himself solidly between the walls.

"It's the party's chance that has it," he said brutally, "and I've got it. Lay a finger on me, and I'll empty this gun over my shoulder. If the bullets don't kill you, I reckon the gas will weaken you a bit. As for that," he concluded with a sneer, "I guess you couldn't trouble me much right now."

Harding, reeling furiously forward, was checked by Mowitt's threat. A threat with reason in it, for already the toxic air had had its effect, and Harding's muscles seemed turned to flaccid rags. His lungs heaved, his heart throbbed painfully.

Then from behind Harding came a woman's clear laugh, a laugh in which there was certainly neither fear nor surprise, a laugh that would have been merry had it not been so filled with biting scorn.

"True to your standards, Trader," cried Hester Bryant, contemptuously.

Now what did that mean? Harding's

mind wavered back from thoughts of Mowitt, from thoughts of death, from consciousness of the hemming walls and of his tortured chest, to take cognizance of Hester's tone and words. Then she had always known Mowitt for what he was! And yet. . . He turned upon Hester and cried out his sudden doubt—

"I thought you were going to marry him."

"Marry him!" Hester's voice was full of astonished incredulity. "How could you? Not if—but I understand now. You thought because I was always with him—because I repulsed you——"

"Then what was it?" demanded Harding.

"It was these—these!" Hester kicked the pearls. "And I tried to tell you what I wanted with them. It was to be free, free to—oh, what does a woman want with freedom? But how could I be your friend, and do this?"

"But why should Mowitt share with you?"

"Because I learned of them first and told him," the explanation tumbled out. "I got it from the talk of the school-children. He found out where they were hidden from Maurarato, by getting him drunk. It was Maurarato tried to kill him from the brake, with a poisoned dart from a blowpipe, that day we first met. Maurarato had come to himself, and remembered what he'd told. And that night Mowitt killed Maurarato."

The revelations came fast, faster than Harding could grasp them. His mind reverted to the one tremendous discovery, knowledge that sang through his being like wine, and he reiterated it joyously—

"Then you didn't mean to——"

"Hush! How could I—Harding?"

It was a moment for the dropping of masks, and for the falling away of the veneer of habituated thoughts. Perhaps no less unexpected to Hester than to Harding was the message that filled Hester's voice, softening it and yet making it alive, impregnating it with all the beauty and all the wonder of life. A message that set Harding's nerves tingling, that filled his failing tissues with fresh life, that roused him, even staggering with weakness as he was, to a sense of fresh power, of deep and joyful adequacy.

With almost a laugh, he whirled and leaped at Mowitt. He flung his arms about that monstrous body, pinned Mowitt's arms to his side, and pulled backward with all his might. Mowitt

grunted at the impact, yielded to the pull; but he thrust out his elbows against the narrow walls, and checked the yielding.

Then—for the fresh air had given him strength greater than Harding's—he struggled forward again. His nostrils were again close to the life-giving vent, and his great bulk again choked the chamber.

Very slowly, his arms began to move forward and up under Harding's grip. And Harding felt the reaction coming upon him, the numbing weakness of oxygen starvation. He knew Mowitt meant to fulfil his threat, and he could not stop him. Up came Mowitt's right hand, past his chest, to his shoulder, above it; and the revolver was strained to the aim.

Harding caught at its muzzle and twisted it desperately. Simultaneous with the twist was the report of the gun, ear-splitting and thunderous in that narrow space.

Harding had spoiled Mowitt's aim, but had not thwarted his purpose. The acrid powder smoke trickled past Harding's head. The gas, mingling with the already poisonous air, set his lungs heaving convulsively. But with all his remaining strength, he held the revolver motionless, pointing to the wall. Somehow it was discharged again.

With the sound of that second shot came an amazing sensation. Harding could not believe it; but of a sudden his burning cheeks were cooled, and his stinging eyes were cleared of the revolver smoke. Fresh air seemed to pour upon his face, and his choking lungs gulped in the sweetness of it. Mowitt staggered back with a laugh.

"Air! Air! We are saved."

With the cry, his grip on the revolver had insensibly relaxed. Harding wrested it away from him, and pressed it between his shoulder blades. With the same movement he kicked backward and scattered the pearls from the basket over the floor.

"So are they," said Harding.

And as he spoke, a fine spray burst through the enlarged hole in the wall, and filled the air with its salty fragrance.



TWO hours later, Hester and Harding stood on the beach just beyond the reach of the surf. Above them swarmed the stars, before them heaved the ocean, behind them rose a vertical wall of black rock, unbroken save for one jagged-edged aperture near its base. To the

right, almost lost in the night, a huge figure ran stumbingly, leaping from rock to rock; and the sound of that stumbling seemed packed with panic fear.

Harding looked back at the hole in the rock, and said awkwardly:

"High tide floods it. Lucky for us. It was that, the action of the water, that wore the wall so thin."

Hester said nothing.

"Mowitt'll be far enough away by morning," observed Harding, "and good ridance. Now I can spin a yarn to the *balian*s that should win their confidence if anything will, leaving you out of the picture, of course. Only—" he hesitated.

"Only what?" prompted Hester, softly.

"Only you," said Harding, a curious trembling and uncertainty in his voice. "And the pearls. They're what might be called fair loot. I can't touch them. My commission—my oath—I'm out of it. But you. You've risked so much—they mean so much to you."

"Oh, please!" cried Hester. "Don't you think I've learned something tonight? Mowitt and avarice, avarice and Mowitt—one. Please don't."

There was a silence during which the sea, symbolic of eternity and of those true things that never die, spoke to them both. Then Harding said slowly:

"Very well, then. Never again."

They began to climb over the shelving rocks. When they reached the white strip of beach, with the *barrio* before them, they stopped to rest, and Hester exclaimed:

"Now, that's curious. The moths——"

"Are gone," said Harding. "I noticed that. There's been a high wind—look at the trees. We'll say it was that—Hester."

His voice deepened.

"We've gone through a great deal together, Hester. We've faced death—surely we know each other. And you know how it's been with me."

She said nothing, but it seemed her figure wavered against the brightening sky.

"I thought, back there in the cave—and even before that, though I couldn't understand—I've nothing to offer you—nothing. But do you still want freedom so much, Hester, or——"

"You foolish boy, I've found it," said Hester.

And after a while they went on to the *barrio*.

The Winner

by
Norman
Springer



Author of "Fire Mountain," "A Man and His Name," etc.

THEY called them "the Twins," though they were not related at all. Charley Nelson's folks had been Danish, while Johnny Swanfelt's blood was all Swedish. Otherwise, the name fitted them well enough.

They were born on the same day, in houses adjoining, on Telegraph Hill. They teethed together. They started to school together, shared the mumps with each other, were one at raiding the fruit-stands and harrying the Chinese basketmen, joined the North Beach Athletic Association on the same night, and gleefully learned to scientifically pummel each other's person. Throughout their boyhood, they presented a common front to the world, for offense and defense.

Now, when the old folks were gone, and they were men grown, they lived together, worked together, and played together. They even looked like each other. Charley was twenty-four, big-bodied, yellow-haired, and blue-eyed; Johnny was blue-eyed, yellow-haired, big-bodied, and twenty-four. They wore each other's clothes, chewed each other's plug, swore each other's oaths. The Twins was the name obvious.

The sea was in their Scandinavian blood. When the time came they must work, they instinctively turned to the water, never giving a shore-going career a thought. Like their hardy forebears, they fished. Winter time, they went bay fishing, in a rented boat, from Meigg's Wharf, and sold their catch to the trust, at scant profit.

In the Spring, they went North with the Packers' fleet, and worked all Summer in the Bering. Ashore or afloat, they were the Twins.

There was no hedging, no "fifty-fifty," about their twinship. Each would go the full distance for the other. Did Johnny have a dollar in his pocket; Charley was entitled to spend one hundred cents of that dollar, if he wanted to. Or the other way around. Did Charley, despite Johnny's pleading, attend the Saturday-night hop of the "Forty Strong," with the avowed intention of cutting out the Forty Strong's chieftain from the graces of his particular best girl—why, Johnny went along as a matter of course, fully conscious of the battle and beating to come.

And when it was all over, and the police in charge of Liberty Hall, Johnny and Charley rode together to the Hall of Justice in a condition of bruised hilarity, while the victims of their united prowess were stacked like cord-wood on the floor of the patrol wagon, at their feet. North Beach said the Twins were a wild, rowdy pair, who would come to no good.

It was, perhaps, natural that the Twins should fall in love with the same girl. Natural or not, they did.

The widow McPheel!

She deserves to stand alone, before an exclamation mark, does the widow McPhee.

She had eyes, had Mary McPhee, merry, scoffing, melting eyes, that could hold a man dumb while they turned him inside

out for a critical inspection. She had a figure, than which no neater has appeared on a magazine cover this year. She had hair, clustering ringlet-like, and each little curl seemed to reach out and entwine a man's thoughts. She had a perfect double row of tiny ivories, and when she smiled their white effect quite dazzled one.

And she had a tongue behind those teeth, had little Mrs. McPhee. Some folk said this tongue had wagged poor old Jerry into his grave five years before his time. An envious slander. Has not a pretty woman by natural right an active tongue? And if an old fool will persist in wedding a lass thirty years younger, he must abide by the consequences, must he not?

The important fact is that old Jerry McPhee died.

No sooner was he decently under the sod, than all the single lads of the North Beach district commenced to cast sheep's eyes in the direction of his widow. It was unanimously agreed among them that poor little Mary McPhee must not be left solitary to face the trials and tribulations of life. Most certainly she needed a man to lean upon. There were some things, they said, that a woman could not attend to with justice to herself—such as looking after property. That took a man's head.

Jerry McPhee had bequeathed his widow a tidy little ship chandlery business, a fleet of fishing-boats, and a row of tenement flats on Filbert Street, one of which Mary occupied. Undoubtedly, said the North Beach lads, poor Mary McPhee needed a bright young fellow to look after her, and her property. So, butcher, baker, plumber and draper, each slicked himself up, and eyed her wishfully.

North Beach opinioned that Mary would dispose of the ship chandlery, and the boats, as soon as possible, even though she sacrificed. It would be the best thing she could do. She couldn't run the business herself, that was certain. No woman could. No lady could have dealings—even business dealings—with roughneck fishermen, and rougher seamen. They would fleece her, they would hoodwink her, they would take her last cent. Mary had better sell while the selling was good.

Think, then, of the chagrin of North Beach when Mary McPhee did just what they said she could not do. Instead of selling, Mary took hold of the business

herself. Instead of going bankrupt, she doubled the business in three months.

She was an artful one, said North Beach. You could tell how artful by watching her. Poor old Jerry must be turning over in his grave at her carrying on. She practised wiles upon those poor, ignorant, defenseless fishermen and seamen, she did. With her eyes, and her smile, and her chatter, she drew them away from her honest competitors, to trade in her store. She was a sly one! And wasn't it—er—unladylike, to practise wiles upon the waterfront?

Little did Mary McPhee care what North Beach said. Nor did baker, draper, butcher or plumber, or the others, appear to care. As Mary's business grew, so did their separate ardors grow.



THE fishing-boat the Twins rented was one of the McPhee fleet, and they always had bought their supplies at the McPhee chandlery. So, of course, they knew Mary. As Jerry's wife she had hardly impressed them. She was just a pretty piece of scenery. But as Jerry's widow, she was an altogether different person. She sat at Jerry's old desk, in the little box-like office, and when they entered she jumped up and thrust her warm little hand into their huge palms.

It was, "Hello, Johnny! Hello, Charley!" and a flashing smile from eyes and lips that quite took away their breaths. Her friendly, blooming little self took complete charge of those two big boys. Perhaps the close approach of Spring had something to do with the Twins' powerful reaction to Mary's charms. Perhaps Mary knew what she was about, and made her manner toward the Twins a little more cordial than toward the others. Anyway, Charley and Johnny promptly fell head over heels in love with her, and lost no time in entering the already overcrowded lists.

Sadly overcrowded, were these lists, as the Twins soon discovered. It was discouraging. They would drop into the store nearly every day, to purchase gear they had no earthly use for, just for the chance of talking to her. Almost always, they would discover a half-dozen or so ahead of them, on the same errand.

They commenced to pay nightly visits to the flat on Filbert Street. They sat in the little parlor, and discussed fishing, and shipping, and prize-fighters, and

kindred topics, which they fancied might interest a pretty girl. They found no chance to introduce the topic which lay closest to their inclination, because the butcher, baker, and others of that tribe, were always present.

The Twins thought it over, and talked it over. They decided that the lists needed purging. There must be an elimination contest, and they, the Twins, would be the eliminators.

So they called upon Mr. Hugo Schultze, the butcher, and informed him that they, the Twins, considered that he, Schultze, was guilty of the heinous offense of pestering a certain young lady with unwelcome attentions. They further stated that Mr. Schultze must forthwith cease said pestering, or something very sudden and horrific would happen to him—and they looked as though they meant what they said.

Mr. Schultze was a man of peace. He felt that discretion, rather than valor, was the course of wisdom. He said the pestering would cease—and looked as though he meant what he said.

The Twins then called upon the baker and draper, and various others. They even waylaid little Bertie Sproule, the plumber, and said to him that if a certain pipe-worker of their acquaintance did not discontinue certain activities in the neighborhood of Filbert Street, that specified pipe-worker would have his joints wiped with a pot of his own lead. Whereupon, Bertie looked pained, and remembered he was engaged to a girl out at the Mission.

The news that the Twins had blockaded the Port of McPhee, and that they were prepared to meet any attempt to run that blockade with their united brawn, quickly spread about the district. There was a prompt and general declaration of neutrality from the ranks of clerks and tradesmen. It was not that they were so very cowardly, or in the habit of having their natural rights invaded.

But—as North Beach said—when two crazy nuts like the Twins, who could and did defy the dreaded Forty Strong gang, and get away with it, put up a “No Trespass” sign, it was only common-sense to heed the sign. The redoubtable Twins were not men to be flouted with impunity. Besides, said North Beach, it was really Mary McPhee’s affair. Let her settle it.

But Mary, though she undoubtedly knew

of the Twins’ declaration, did not seem offended with them. Rather, she appeared to be relieved at this dispersal of her eager squires. She smiled upon the Twins more radiantly than ever.

Of course their blockade did not extend to the business. They could hardly drive her custom away, and they had sense enough not to attempt to. But they had an open field during their nightly visits to Filbert Street.

This open field, Charley and Johnny discovered, brought them no nearer their goal. Mary listened as interestedly as ever to discourses upon shipping, fishing and prize-fighting, but laughed away, or parried with bewildering skill, their blundering attempts to place the nightly conversation upon a personal basis. Mary had them guessing, and she kept them guessing.

Perhaps if the Twins had divided their assaults, if Charley had taken one night, and Johnny the next, they would have made more progress. But, all their lives, they had faced their difficulties together, and it never entered their minds to attack otherwise this supreme difficulty.

The Twins thought it over and talked it over, and took it to Luigi Scandini.

Luigi was the sort of man you could naturally take your heart troubles to. He kept the little barber-shop next door to the McPhee ship chandlery. He not only knew Mary McPhee personally, but, by virtue of his calling, was expert in the proper counseling of worried swains; for, as all the he-world knows, barbers are hereditary priests of Aphrodite, and possess powers of divination in all amative affairs.

Luigi listened while the Twins stated the case, his black eyes snapping, his oval, classic face flushed swarthy, his sympathetic smile disclosing his white teeth. He was a very handsome lad, indeed, and had he been other than a “dago,” the Twins might have thought twice ere asking his advice regarding Mary McPhee. But of course a dago could have no personal interest in the sweet Mary.

“And we’ve shoed away all that gang of four-flushers what was hangin’ around,” said twin Charley.

“But we ain’t getting anywhere with her,” complained twin Johnny.

“Every time we start to talk mushy-like, she laughs at us,” said Charley.

“Or starts in to chew the rag about

something else," added Johnny. "What'll we do, Luigi? We can't slug her on the jaw, and make her listen, like a guy!"

"No, you can't," thoughtfully agreed Luigi. "But you have the right idea about it, boys. You got to make 'em listen. They like to be rushed. You want to talk hard, and big, and if she tries to slide out, just keep right on."

"We tried that," said Charley, "and it didn't work. She got a headache, and went to bed."

"Hum—that was sliding out," said Luigi, sagely. "You got to corner 'em. They always try to slide out. Let's see—you boys want to pop the question before you go North with the Packers' fleet, next week, isn't that it?"

"We're not goin' North this year," said Charley. "We're going to stick around."

"What? Not going North!" exclaimed Luigi, blankly. "But—what will you do?"

"Oh, just stick around," answered Johnny. "But you got it right when you said we wanted to pop the question. There's too many fresh gazabos trailin' after her, and we can't be on deck all the time. We want to put it up to her so she can't slide out."

"Hum, hum, let's see," pondered Luigi.

His brow was furrowed, and he regarded the pair as though their problem worried him. Then, suddenly, it cleared.

"Why, sure, that's the way!"

"What's the way?" chorused the Twins.

"Why, just this," said Luigi. "Here you've been trying to corner her at home, where she has a chance to get away. You want to brace her down here, in the store, where she's got to listen."

"No good—always a gang around," said Johnny.

"Not always," replied Luigi. "Watch your chance and you can get her alone. Then waltz right up to her and have your say all ready."

"But how'll we say it?" asked the Twins.

"Very firm," advised Luigi. "You got to be firm with 'em. I always am, and I never have any trouble. I get my way. Be firm, talk determined-like, and don't give way an inch. Tell her you want an answer, and intend to get it. Tell her you're going to stick around, and not go North this year—be sure and tell her that—and put it up to her square that you won't stand for any dodging. They like you

to press 'em like that. They all do."

"All right," dubiously agreed the Twins. "We'll watch our chance—maybe tomorrow—"

"No—now!" interrupted Luigi. "I have it—I'll slip in next door and see if the coast is clear. I'll pretend I want to speak to my brother, Joe; you know, he's porter. You wait here."

They waited uncomfortably for quite a long time. With their noses pressed against the window of the barber-shop, the Twins saw Luigi disappear into Mrs. McPhee's stronghold. They kept their noses pressed against the window, waiting for his reappearance, and they found ample time to wonder if he were recounting the story of his life to his brother Joe.

"Dagos are long-winded guys," commented Charley.

They saw some half-dozen shipmen of their acquaintance emerge from the McPhee establishment, hurriedly, as though urged away, and depart in various directions. Then, finally, came Luigi, his face wreathed in smiles. When he burst into the barber-shop his eyes were impish in their snapping brightness, and his voice vibrant with excitement. It was evident Luigi relished his rôle of first-aid to Cupid.

"Now is your chance, boys! She is all alone," exclaimed the barber.

"What kept you so long?" demanded Johnny.

"I had to wait until the coast was clear," explained Luigi. "There are no customers in there, now, and my brother, Joe, and the shipping-clerk, have gone up in the loft to do some work. The bookkeeper has gone to lunch. She is there alone."

The Twins hurriedly spruced themselves before Luigi's mirror.

"Now don't let her slide out," continued Luigi. "Waltz right up to her, and make her listen. Show her you're boss. That's what they like. I always make 'em understand I'm boss, and they always listen to me. Don't be afraid of her, boys!"

He ushered them out, and followed them to the very door of the ship chandlery with his brave counsel.



THE Twins found Mary alone, as Luigi said. She was seated at the big desk in the little office, and she was so busy she did not hear their entrance. When they were right by her

side, she looked up with a start of surprise.

"Why, hello! How you startled me!" she said to them.

The Twins returned her greeting soberly. Johnny closed the office door and stood with his back to it, arms folded across his chest. He tried to mask his trepidation by screwing his features into an expression of ferocity. Charley assumed the rôle of spokesman. His cap revolved slowly in his nervous fingers, but his words were delivered in heavy, funeral tones which fairly dripped with solemn determination.

"Mary, we've come to put it up to you straight," he said.

Johnny nodded grave assent.

"What?" responded Mary.

"So don't try to slide out," added Charley.

"Why, what are you talking about? Why are you standing there like two sticks? Is somebody dead?" asked Mary.

"Now, no slidin', Mary!" replied Charley. He was somewhat taken aback by Mary's attitude, but continued his task valiantly.

"You know we're talking about you. We've been hanging around quite a while, Mary, going up to the house every night, and everything. You know why! But we never get a chance to put it up to you square, because you always slide out. So we cornered you; you got to listen."

"Yes, got to," affirmed Johnny.

"What?" exclaimed Mary, with frank amazement. "Oh, come now, don't be silly, boys! I can't listen to that kind of talk now. These are my business hours. Come out in the store and I'll show you that copper paint I was talking about."

"No!" said Johnny, very firmly.

"There you go, tryin' to slide out," stated Charley. "But you got to listen, Mary. You know, we been hanging around—"

"Hanging around!" exclaimed Mary. While her eyes remained merry, her tongue suddenly took on an edge. "I should say you have been hanging around. I declare to goodness, you have worried the life half out of me. I can't stir a foot without stumbling over you! And you have been going around driving my friends away. Oh, don't try to deny it! I know. What did you tell poor Mr. Schultze?"

"That you would head him up in a keg of his own sauerkraut if he didn't stop visiting me! Didn't you? And you did something to Bertie Sproule, I know you

did—the poor boy is afraid to even look at me when we pass on the street! And now, not content with turning my parlor into a prize-ring, and making my name common all over North Beach, you come down here and interfere with my business! The idea!"

"Aw, Mary—" commenced Charley.

"Don't 'Aw, Mary' me!" tartly declared the lady. "You are a pair of regular hoodlums! Going into Liberty Hall and fighting the Forty Strong bunch, and getting arrested! Over that hussy, Lizzie O'Day, too! Then you come blundering around me, like a couple of baby elephants, trying to be sweet. I suppose you hold me just as high as that Lizzie O'Day?"

"Aw—Mary—" stuttered Charley.

"You don't want to get sore about our shoo'in' those guys away, Mary," pleaded Johnny, taking up Charley's burden. "They are four-flushers, they are. They didn't want you. They only wanted your money. They didn't love you, Mary. Now, we——"

"Oh, so they only wanted my money?" softly purred Mary. "Poor little me! So I am not competent to manage my own affairs, is that it? I need a couple of husky blockheads like you to protect me? Oh, thank you, so much! And of course you two never gave a thought to my money! You have spent the whole Winter guarding me, simply out of sympathy, haven't you? Of course, the *Vixen* never entered your minds? And you have come in here today, when I am alone, to browbeat and insult me for my own good? The idea!"

"Aw, Mary—" was the weak chorus.

In truth, the Twins were disarmed. It was that shrewd reference to the *Vixen* that melted all their hard resolution, made them wriggle and shuffle, and gape tongue-tied and abashed at each other. It was such an unjust and unanswerable accusation.

For the Twins had thought of the *Vixen*. They had been more than human, otherwise. But they had kept their thoughts of the *Vixen* strictly in the background, and the widow, herself, filled their eyes, leaving no room for the main chance. She outweighed a dozen *Vixens* in the Twins' mental measure.

The *Vixen* was a boat, the queen of the McPhee fleet, and before old Jerry died, she was the one apple of the Twins' eye. Fifty foot over all, a forty-horse-power

engine, and a sloop rig, composed the *Vixen*. For three years the Twins had lusted to own her. They had begged Jerry to sell. Jerry was willing, but he would not listen to a proposal of time payments, he wanted twenty-five hundred dollars cash. This sum might just as well have been twenty-five million dollars, so far as the Twins were concerned.

Yearly, they went North determined to bring back the required sum. But the long, lonely nights in the Bering incline men toward the amusements of poker and smuggled "hooch," expensive pastimes, both. The best the Twins had done was to bring back to San Francisco fifteen hundred dollars, and this sum dwindled to five hundred, during the inevitable first days ashore, when they were renewing their acquaintance with civilization.

So the *Vixen* remained the queen of the McPhee fleet.

Of course, they had thought of the *Vixen*. They couldn't help it. But to insinuate, as Mary did, that they had been sparking her all these months with the boat as their object, was untrue. And Mary knew it.

"It ain't the *Vixen*, Mary," they protested. "You know that. You wouldn't think that of us? It is just you, Mary."

"Just me, is it?" said Mary. "You have taken me as an excuse for loafing around all Winter, and now, instead of going North with the fleet like decent workers, you are going to loaf all Summer! Aren't you?"

"How did you know—" commenced Johnny.

"Ah—so you are!" triumphantly pronounced the lady. "I just knew it! Well, you are not!"

"You will not listen to us," complained Charley.

"Listen to you?" said Mary. "I am listening. Why don't you say something? What do you two kids want me to do? Marry you?"

"Yes!" they both cried.

"Well, which one?" asked Mary. "I can't marry you both—the law will not allow it."

Charley looked at Johnny, and Johnny looked at Charley. They were stumped. They didn't know. This was something they had never thought of. Imagination had never carried them beyond the popping of the question; the fact that both could not enjoy the prize had not occurred to

them. Now, Mary, herself, had popped the question, and they were stumped.

Then Charley had an inspiration.

"The one you like best," he said.

"What if I like you both the same?" replied Mary. "What if I don't like either of you enough for marriage? What then?"

"Well, we got to decide somehow," stated Johnny.

"Very well, I'll do the deciding," said Mary.

Her recent brusqueness was gone; she smilingly faced the two men, her words honeyed, her eyes dancing with merriment.

"You boys are loafers. I'll never marry a loafer, so you'll have to go to work. I'll never marry a hoodlum, so you'll have to stop fighting, and drinking, and gambling. I'll never marry a spendthrift, so you'll have to save your money. Now, remember, I'm making no promises—but the first one who comes to me with a thousand dollars saved will hear a welcome piece of news! Now, then, who will be the winner?"

Alas, the baleful influence of the unfair sex! Two minutes later, Johnny and Charley emerged upon the sidewalk, the Twins no longer, but "the Rivals."

II



AS RIVALS, then, Charley and Johnny next day carried themselves on board the *Star of Muscovy*.

The second dog-watch found the *Star of Muscovy* well to sea, humping for her offing with a half-gale filling her sails. It also found fishermen-seamen Nelson and Swanfelt squatting in separate bunks in the fishermen's 'tween-deck forecabin. They eyed each other silently and morosely across the narrow strip of deck; while their fellow fishermen-seamen, some seven score in number, eyed them solemnly and suspiciously, and discussed them in hoarse and audible whispers.

For they had gone to sea sober!

Wretched sobriety! They were heartily ashamed of themselves; never before had they gone to sea sober. Damning sobriety! It was losing them a lot of face. 'Tis no light deed which flouts the age-old custom that commands a man to leave the dock a sheet or two in the wind, at least. Charley and Johnny not only left the dock disgustingly sober, but once clear, they obstinately disregarded the many proffered flasks and demijohns. Of their own free

will, they went to sea sober! No wonder the fore-castle talked behind the hand.

All this misery because Mary McPhee said the winner must not drink.

Jimmy Sloane, the ex-Navy man, busied himself, during this dog-watch, in making a book on the run North. Excitement high; bets heavy. The *Star of Muscovy* was a whale of a full-rigged ship, crossing skysail yards, and with a reputation as a fast sailer. To port, and in sight, were the *Star of Peru* and the *Star of Scotland*, also known as speedy ships. Just beyond the horizon were other stars of the Packers' constellation. It was an even start for the annual race, with prospects excellent that the *Muscovy* would arrive first at the Pass. Wherefore, the popularity of the book of Jimmy Sloane.

Now the Twins were known throughout the fleet as inveterate gamblers. It was said they played odd and even in their dory with the fish they caught. Mr. Sloane, approaching them, confidently expected them to plunge to the extent of at least two months' wages—not yet earned—and he had their names already written down.

Separately, and emphatically, the Twins refused to wager a penny. It was hard, terribly hard, this renunciation of life's chief joy; a suffering-martyr expression shone in the face of each. An expression of astonished curiosity illumined Mr. Sloane's features. He could not fathom this strange apostasy of two game sports. But his curiosity was unsatisfied; they just didn't care to bet—that was all.

For Mary McPhee said the winner must not gamble.

Observe that Mr. Sloane was denied separately. The Twins were seated in separate bunks, and, so far as communication went, each ignored the other's existence. Of course, the fore-castle noted this singular circumstance. The bunks in the fishermen's quarters were of double width, each to contain two men, and hitherto the Twins had ever squatted side by side on their common bed. The fore-castle wondered what this separation meant. Had the Twins fallen out?

It was not a falling out, but they were agreed they must play lone hands this season in the Bering. Each was determined to work himself to the very limit, to accumulate the thousand-dollar paycheck which would win the elusive widow.

10

They were rivals, and common prudence said they must not be bunk-mates or dory-mates this year.

Such was their thought and unvoiced decision. Without saying anything to each other, they sought separate bunks, and were already casting speculative eyes about the fore-castle in search of prospective dory-mates. But—and this worried them greatly—how explain to each other and the world in general? Public curiosity demanded an explanation of their strange estrangement, and common decency commanded any but the true explanation. Also, how announce their decision to each other? Johnny could hardly walk up to Charley and say—

"You big slob, I'm through with you till after we get back to Frisco and find out who's winner!"

That would hurt Charley's feelings, and Johnny loved his rival too much to want to hurt his feelings. Neither regarded their rivalry as the end of his twinship; it was just an interregnum.

The jabberfest solved the difficulty.

The jabberfest is the fisherman's parliament. It convenes the first day of the voyage, and adjourns the last day, the daily session occurring in the second dog-watch. Much like other and more famous parliaments is the jabberfest, both as to scope of deliberations and effect of decisions. The ills and sins of society are talked about, talked, talked, talked about, and formally cured or abolished. Whereupon, aforesaid ills and sins continue business as of yore.

The jabberfest was in full swing at the other end of the fore-castle for an hour before Johnny and Charley noticed it. Their attention was captured when the gentleman from Greece called the gentleman from Ireland a liar, and the Irish gentleman replied by heaving his number twelve seaboot at the Greek gentleman's head. The resulting exchange of parliamentary courtesies caused the idea to occur simultaneously to the Twins that here, on the floor of the jabberfest, could they justify, to each other and to the world, the rupture of their friendship.



THE question before the house related, of course, to the war. Specifically, it was—

"Who started it; who is to blame?"

A pregnant subject for debate; short

and ugly words and leather seaboots were likely, the Twins thought, to continue to cloud the atmosphere, which was as they wished.

When the gentleman from Greece had been assisted into his bunk, the discussion was resumed.

"Der Russ, it vas dem!" asserted a young man from the Baltic shore.

"Garn! Yer a blushin' liar; it was yer bloomin' Kaiser!" said a Liverpool man.

Johnny coughed to clear his throat, preparatory to engaging in the fray. He did not have to think about his speech; it already trembled on his tongue. Johnny Swanfelt was of Swedish blood, and the bogey-man of his nursery days had been the White Devil of the Finns. So, of course, he knew who was to blame.

"The Czar done it!" bellowed Johnny.

Charley coughed to clear his throat. Charley Nelson's folks had sailed from Copenhagen, and he had been suckled on tales of Schleswig-Holstein. So, of course, he knew who started it.

"G'wan—the Kaiser done it!" yelled Charley.

"The Czar—you ———"

"Kaiser—you ———"

A unique feature of the jabberfest debates is that the participants never descend to argument. To the mind of the assembly, argument is weakness, an admission of defeat. Nor is explanation permitted. You simply state your belief, say "he done it," and prove he "done" it by calling your opponent names. If you are a good swearer, your statement stands—until a better swearer comes along and knocks it down.

It is a commendable rule. The audience is both entertained and instructed. The members of the jabberfest may not really care who "done" it, but they are, one and all, expert judges of profanity, and a new oath, dropped white-hot from the forge of conflict, is an asset to be garnered.

They garnered a rich harvest during this memorable debate between the Twins. Both Charley and Johnny were proud of their ability to swear for an hour straight without repeating or extending themselves. They extended themselves this evening. It was the most entertaining and instructive session the jabberfesters could recall. Two men can not live together as brothers without finding out lots of interesting things

about each other. Johnny and Charley recounted these things, highly embellished. They delved into each other's ancestry, even unto the third and fourth generations. The air was blue with their efforts. They looked at each other with loving eyes, but the names they called each other bespoke bloody battle.

With each hot oath the breach between them widened. The forecastle no longer wondered why they were not bunkies this voyage; they wondered when it would come to fisticuffs. They hoped soon. With two such magnificent swearers facing each other, it was impossible to decide the debate. But a fist fight between the champions would undoubtedly fix the blame upon the man "who done it." Meanwhile the edified jabberfesters cheered each wordy onslaught.

But they did not cheer impartially. Each jabberfester had his own opinion as to "who done it." All the Swedes and Finns and Germans cheered Johnny, when he said, and resaid, the Czar was to blame. The allies ranged solidly behind Charley, when he blamed the Kaiser. In all the assembly there were but two neutrals.

One of these was Jimmy Sloane, the ex-Navy man. Mr. Sloane had for long confined his reading to the literature provided by our most prominent newspaper publisher. Consequently, he had his own theory as to the cause of the war. It was the result of a dark, Oriental intrigue.

"Them Japs done it," said Jimmy Sloane.

The other neutral was fisherman Frank Bolgano. Mr. Bolgano didn't know and didn't care who was to blame for the war, but he did know who caused the dent in his skull. That dent in his skull was more to Mr. Bolgano than either Czar or Kaiser; and none other than the Twins had made that dent. For Bolgano was a warrior of the Forty Strong, and he had been present when the Twins made their raid on Liberty Hall.

So Mr. Bolgano watched the widening of the breach with glistening eyes. It was too good to be true, this separation of the Twins! Mr. Bolgano fancied himself as a fighting man, and he lusted for revenge. He knew he could not face both Twins, but he was willing to take a chance with either one, alone.

He took the chance. He rudely interrupted one of Charley's most artistic flights

of profanity, and intimated that his, Charley's, chewing of the rag was wearisome, and hadn't he better cut it out?

Charley responded joyously. His surcharged feelings needed this vent. He took Mr. Bolgano in hand, and very quickly and thoroughly dressed him down. When he was finished, Johnny took Mr. Bolgano in hand, and very quickly and thoroughly dressed him up. The unfortunate warrior of the Forty Strong finally extricated himself from beneath the scuttle-butt, whither he had been knocked, and fled to the sanctuary of the galley, where he hid behind the ample form of his friend and brother-in-law, the cook. This worthy discouraged the Twins' pursuit with a meat-chopper and a kettle of boiling water.

So the Twins retired from the field, and went to bed in their separate bunks, well satisfied with their evening's work. They hadn't decided "who done it," but they had accomplished the desired, and temporary, breach, and each had had a little pleasant exercise at the finish.

But, at the thought of that pleasant exercise, a flitting, accusing vision visited each pillow. For Mary McPhee said the winner must not fight! But then, they each decided, there is a limit to the amount of virtue a man can stand at one time.

III

 IT WAS an exceptionally mild, and, therefore, lengthy season in the Bering. The royal salmon was plentiful and unwary. A record year. When, at black-ice time, the *Star of Muscovy* spread her wings, and pointed her nose southward, her capacious belly filled with the catch, the land-hungry denizens of the fishermen's forecastle one and all possessed fat pay-checks with which to color dreams of Frisco's joys.

And of all the fat pay-checks, the two fattest were owned by Charley Nelson and Johnny Swanfelt.

The Twins had labored throughout the long months like men possessed and driven by devils—so averred successive and exhausted dory-mates. Moreover, by their exemplary conduct during their leisure hours, they continued to dwell on the lofty, arid heights they had attained at the commencement of the voyage. Their deportment was as circumspect as that of a

Y. M. C. A. secretary should be. Not once did they backslide. They turned frosty backs to the "hooch" merchants, they frowned at the cards, they were deaf to the seductive click of the dice.

The only amusements they permitted themselves were, first, to add, and re-add, the slowly growing columns in their account books; and second, to occasionally visit the jabberfest and engage each other in fierce debate over Czar and Kaiser. This jabberfesting was necessary, they decided, to keep alive the fiction of their enmity. Not yet had it been settled "who done it."

The majority of the crowd compared checks, and joyously told each other just what particular bright color they intended to paint the Barbary Coast, once they got on shore. But not the Twins. Despite their fattest checks, they turned to each other and to the world sorrowful countenances, and the magic figures on their vouchers were jealously guarded secrets. They squatted in their separate bunks, even as they had squatted the first day out, and stared at each other even more morosely.

This is what Johnny thought:

"Well, I've lost. I worked till I nigh broke my fool back, and saved till this bunch thinks I'm the stingiest coot on the high seas, and what have I to show for it? Nine hundred and three dollars, that's what. And Mary said a thousand!

"Charley has won. He wouldn't be sitting there so quiet and contented-like if he didn't have it. I bet he has a good hundred above. Well, he always was a lucky guy. Nine hundred and three dollars, and it might just as well be nothing. Unless—I wonder if I could raise the balance, and beat him up to the house when we make port?"

This is what Charley thought:

"Well, I've lost. I've worked my fingers to the bone, and skimmed till this bunch thinks I'm a blasted miser, and what have I to show for it? Nine hundred and seven dollars. And Mary said a thousand!

"Johnny has won. He wouldn't be grinning there like a ruddy ape if he didn't have it. I bet his check reads fifty or sixty above. Well, he always was a lucky guy. My nine hundred and seven dollars might just as well be ninety cents. Unless—I wonder if I could raise the wind, and beat him out to Filbert Street when we get in?"

But "raising the wind" was not so easy as their first hopes led them to believe. They had left Mary McPhee with the definite understanding they must *earn* the thousand dollars. That precluded their borrowing from their friends, and their gambling. No other road to wealth was open, for they had left work behind.

So the Twins sailed miserably homeward. They joined but half-heartedly in the jabberfest, and avoided each other. Each was afraid of the other's pity.

Then, a few days out of Frisco, the jabberfest for the second time cut the knot of their dilemma. In this way.

There was a discussion between a Scot and a Cape Cod man concerning the carrying on of sail. The specific question was whether the Old Man had been justified in rousing the middle watch to shorten down, after three kites had blown away. The Scot said, yes; the Cape Cod man, no.

The jabberfest did not take much interest in the debate. Of course, it consisted, as did all the jabberfestings, chiefly of personal recriminations and insults, but neither of the principals was an artist in profanity, and the question didn't amount to much.

Perhaps the Cape Cod man sensed this lack of interest, and resented it. Anyway, he struck upon a happy plan for making the entire fore-castle sit up and take notice. He wound up a scathing arraignment of his opponent with a challenge to fight.

"And," said he, "just to make the go interesting, I'll put my check up against yours! Are you on, you blankety, blank swab of a Glasgow guttersnipe?"

"I'm on, you yapping codfish!" returned the Scot.

Johnny glanced out of the corners of his eyes at Charley, and Charley peered likewise at Johnny. Simultaneously, an idea occurred to them, a daring, illuminating idea which set each atremble at the thought of putting it into execution. If it could only be pulled off! Heartache, then, would give way to a joyous breast.

Thus it was with more than ordinary interest that the Twins watched the pretty bout between the Yank and the Scot, and saw, at the finish, the Yank walk away with the two pay-checks, while the Glasgow lad was put to bed by his commiserating friends. It was such a neat, simple, businesslike proceeding. If, thought each Twin, I could just walk away, like that,

with his—Charley's or Johnny's—check! Would it be gambling? A violation of the rules of the race Mary had laid down? Each thought it over, and decided it would not be gambling. It would be hard work.

But they must proceed cautiously, gradually work up to this desirable act of walking away with the other fellow's pay-check. It would never do for Johnny to let Charley even imagine what was in Johnny's mind, else Charley would get wise and refuse to place his pay-check on the knees of Mars. And *vice versa*. It must be done craftily, the challenge flung when passion had been aroused by debate, and the other twin led by his feelings to pledge his check upon the outcome of the battle. That there would be a battle, neither twin doubted.

The next session of the jabberfest, Johnny sauntered casually into the gathering, leaned against a stanchion, and yawned his disinterest in issues and events. Charley, watching for opportunity, then sauntered casually up, leaned against the opposite stanchion, and mildly brought the pre-eminent question before the house.

"There ain't a bit of doubt about it," he said, "the Kaiser done it!"

Johnny stiffened to attention, and his mantle of disinterest fell from him.

"Why, you big mutt," he rejoined, "it's as plain as your nose—the Czar done it!"

They were at it hammer and tongs in a moment. The crowd whooped and closed in, and there was a rush for points of vantage when the word passed along the deck that the Twins were chewing the rag, and chewing strong.

For an hour the controversy raged, with ever-increasing fury. Each outburst of the orators was more terrible than the last. The Twins, warming to their work, swore as they had never believed they could swear. The audience, evenly divided as to sentiment, roared approval as the hot oaths rained, each faction stanchly supporting its particular champion.

Johnny ended his grandest effort, wherein he had reached hitherto unguessed heights of vituperation, and gulped breath for a new flight. Charley, judging the moment arrived, threw his bomb.

"I ain't going to waste any more time arguing with you, you slab-sided, splay-footed stock-fish!" he informed Johnny. "I'll just prove the Kaiser done it! I'll

fight you. Come on out on deck, and I'll make you admit I'm right, you wooden-headed gasbag! Come on—we'll fight! And just to show you what kind o' sport I am, I'll put up my pay-check against your pay-check, you swivel-necked dodo! Well? Are you four-flushin', or are you on? It's a nice, fat check, bucko!"

Johnny's Adam's apple worked up and down a few times ere he replied to the challenge. Charley was in mortal fear he understood the ruse, and would decline to wager. But Johnny's slowness was caused by his efforts to mask his eagerness. Johnny thought the offer unbelievable luck.

"I'm on," he said. "My check ain't so slim either. Up she goes!"

 ALL arrangements for the fray were placed in the hands of Jimmy Sloane. He was the logical referee. He was the single neutral in the forecastle, regarding the issue to be settled by combat, and, as a Navy man, he was skilled in the punctilio of the ring. For it was instantly and commonly agreed that this bout, because of the magnitude of the question involved, and the amount of money to change hands, must be conducted as a genuine prize-fight, with rules, rather than a rough-and-tumble affair such as the Scot and the Cape Cod man had indulged in. This was an affair of champions, a fight that would go down in history.

The first preliminary was the posting of the wagers. Here Johnny showed his canny; he would not show his check even to Mr. Sloane.

"This fathead (reference to Charley) has beefed about his fat check," stated Johnny. "Well, it ain't as fat as mine, but I ain't going to give him the satisfaction of knowing that. He ain't going to see it. I'll endorse it where you can see me, Jimmy, and then I'll put it in an envelope, and seal it, and give it to you. He can do the same with his check. That's fair, ain't it?"

"Sure, that's fair," Charley agreed.

With the sealed envelopes in his hand, Mr. Sloane mounted a sea-chest and addressed all and sundry.

"I take me great pleasure at this time," said Mr. Sloane, "in announcing a stand-up go betwixt the twin prides o' North Beach! You gents has all heard the challenge. These lads will foight for their pay-checks,

which I hold in me hand, good, as ye all know, for face value in any saloon betwixt Nome and San Diego.

"Also, will they foight to prove if the Dutchman or the Rooshun done it. Which same, I will say in passin', is on the wrong track entirely, for 'tis me private opinion, based on great study, that it was nayther one, but the ould Mickadoo, the dirthy brown divil, who done it! However, 'tis a free country, and every gent has a right to say who done it, and 'tis not me who'll interfere. This foight, I hereby announce, will be a finish foight wid bare knuckles, according to Navy rules, which same is Quanesbury, wid all rough stuff an' dirthy work barred, save by the referee, which same is meself, in case I'm attacked.

"The foight will be fought immediately, at wanst, but first will I make ready the ring, and take your bets. Therefore, I hereby announce the book on this here foight is open. All bets will be according to Navy rules, wid a tin per cint. rake-off for the principals. Now step up, gents, and lay your money on your man!"

An hour later, the champions, stripped to the buff, entered the ring the master of ceremonies had made ready. The master, himself brave and agile in B. V. D.'s, followed them, first thoughtfully providing himself with a belaying-pin, in case self-defense proved necessary.

The ring, be it said, was a very good square. It was the open space of deck bounded by the deck-house, the main hatch, and the spare spars, an ample area for the purpose, and possessing the added advantage of permitting a good view of the bout to all the spectators. Mr. Sloane had cannily marshaled the audience with an eye to possible riot. To port, and behind Johnny's corner, were massed the cohorts of Germany. On the starboard deck, behind Charley's corner, were massed the legions of the Allies. The width of the ship separated them. Overhead, from the fore and aft bridge, the Old Man, and other lordly personages from aft, obtained an inclusive, bird's-eye view.

It was the fight—the fight of the season, of all the seasons in the memory of the oldest fisherman. Already, it is becoming a date of reference; they are beginning to say in the Packers' fleet—

"Why, it happened the year the Twins had their big fight on the *Muscovy*!"

With so evenly matched opponents, a quick decision was not expected; nor was it obtained. The crowd expected a run for their money. They got it.

In the main, it was a fair fight. The Twins were no strangers to Queensbury rules, though, it must be admitted, the rough-and-tumble game was more to their liking and experience. They loved each other too much to actually try for an unfair advantage, but, after they warmed to the work, there naturally occurred moments when they reverted to type. As when, after a double fall, Charley unexpectedly found Johnny's nose between his teeth, and commenced to chew upon it; or when Johnny, in a clinch, commenced to separate Charley's ears from his head.

But such occurrences were rare and unpremeditated, and quickly discouraged by Mr. Sloane and his belaying-pin. In the main, it was a stand-up and knock-down fight, with the principals strong in offense and careless in defense, and the claret freely flowing.

The tenth round found Charley groggy, and the port-deck hysterical. The twentieth round found Johnny groggy, and the starboard-deck hysterical. The thirtieth round found them both groggy, and the Old Man, on the bridge, cheering hoarsely.

The fortieth round brought the finish. The Twins staggered out of their respective corners, gory and horrid examples of man's inhumanity to man, and felt their ways toward each other. The eyes of each were puffed closed, they breathed like blacksmith's bellows, they wobbled.

They met in the center of the ring, their extended left hands touching. Each drew back his right, and launched a mighty swing in the general direction of the other. The imp of battles must surely have timed and directed those wild blows. They both left the side at the same instant, they both landed at the same instant—flush on the points of two outthrust jaws. The very next instant, the two gladiators were peacefully sleeping, feet to feet, on the deck.

Jimmy Sloane sat down on the edge of the main hatch, scratched his head with the end of his belaying-pin, and unbosomed himself to the general pandemonium.

"Glory be, they're both out! They both won, an' they both lost! An' that proves the Mickadoo done it!"

IV



SOME time later, the Twins regained consciousness and vision, to discover themselves lying in their respective bunks.

Awakening and seeing, however, were not coincident. Their battered organs of sight were swollen shut, and would not open to the will. So each lifted his battered and swollen fingers and pushed up the lids. The vision each obtained, of himself lying in state in his bunk, confirmed the awakening suspicion. A second—or an hour—ago, fighting on deck, now, lying in bed. The conclusion unescapable. Defeat. Each murmured—

"I lost; he won!"

The widow lost! Each lay quiet for a moment, digesting this thought. Lost, lost indeed, for the loser would have not a penny to take ashore, while the winner would have far more than the specified amount. Lucky fellow! He was up on deck now, receiving the winnings and the acclamations of the mob.

The Twins could hear the shouts of the rival factions as they surged about the main hatch, where Mr. Sloane was paying all bets, "according to Navy rules."

Well, he deserved it, each Twin thought of the other. It was *some* fight! Old Charley—or Johnny—sure went after the bacon! And as for little Mary McPhee—well, perhaps it was best as it turned out. The old horse—Charley or Johnny—was crazy about her, and must have her to be happy. And now it is settled, we can be together again!

Thus did each Twin quickly arrive at a state of mind where he was glad for the other's sake. The sweet thought that, now Mary's hand had been disposed, their old friendship could be renewed, quite drew the sting from defeat, and, indeed, put Mary, herself, in the background. They could be chums again! Each thought of feeling the friendly pressure of the other's hand upon his shoulder—oh, how bitterly they had craved that brotherly slap during the long, lonely months—and again hearing in his ear the other's cheery, Twinly oaths.

So keen was their eagerness to be chums again, that each rolled over on his side, and peered across the forecandle at the other's bunk. Neither expected to see the other—the winner—in the opposite bunk, but the

common feeling was that even a glimpse of the other's belongings would, that moment, be comforting. When their hazy vision dimly perceived each other's pros- trate forms, their thought was common.

"Why, the old horse is laid up! He must be bunged up as bad as I am. I'll go over to him, now, and make it up."

Charley was first upon his feet, and he reached Johnny's bunk, while Johnny's legs were still trailing over the board. The heart of each was full. Their bruised features twisted into semblance of smiles. They extended their hands, and the same words trembled on the lips of each—

"Say, old scout, I'm glad for you!"

But ere fingers touched, ere the first words fell, came interruption in the person of Jimmy Sloane, nicking time as closely as Nick Carter ever did. In one hand Mr. Sloane held the fateful envelopes, with the other he grasped a woolen sock, heavy with something that clinked.

"Well, boys, I be ready to pay ye off," said Mr. Sloane. "Charley, you get Johnny's check, and Johnny, you get Charley's."

The Twins were dazed.

"But—he won!" they exclaimed, each indicating the other.

"Ye both won," explained Mr. Sloane. "'Twas a double knockout. Some of them cheap skates on deck was for callin' it a draw, and declaring bets off. But I says to them, says I, as how you two gents, after pullin' off such a swell shindy, was entitled to your rake-off, and therefore, after much deliberation, meself, as referee, says you both won, bets to be paid Navy style, wid the tin per cint. held out, and did any wan say no, because I was no blasted hyphen, but a good Irish-American, praise God, and I would stand up to any squarehead or Dutchman on the ship and prove 'twas the ould Mickadoo done it, the dirthy spalpeen. So they said unanymous as how you both won, and come across like sports."

The Twins took the two envelopes from Sloane's extended hand, and opened them with trembling fingers. Each felt victory in his bones. The widow's image was again in the foreground of their minds. Each unfolded and scanned the valuable wafer of paper his envelope contained, confident that four stout figures would meet his eye. It took a full moment for the blighting

truth to sink in. Johnny had Charley's check—he saw nine hundred and three dollars written thereon. Charley had Johnny's check—and nine hundred and seven dollars met his dazed gaze.

"You blasted shark! I thought—" cried Johnny.

"You blamed swindler! I thought—" exploded Charley.

They stared at each other, the flash of resentment giving way to retrospection.

"And to think we neither of us had enough," said Charley.

"And to think we hammered each other for nothing," said Johnny, feeling his jaw.

"We both lost," commented Charley.

"We're in the same fix as before we started," added Johnny.

Both commenced to grin. Relief at any ending of the feud quite sugared over their disappointment. Mary again receded to the background. Of an accord, they extended their hands for the clasp that would renew the twinship.

Then Mr. Sloane nicked time again.

"Ye are after forgettin' the rake-off, boys," said he.

"What?" they said.

"'Tis here, in me sock," stated the referee. "Your tin per cint. o' the bets. I made them give me cash."

He emptied the contents of the sock upon the bunk. There was quite an imposing heap of gold, silver and currency.

"Three hundred," continued Mr. Sloane. "Fifty-fifty, ye know."

The Twins stared at each other, and then at the pile. Their extended hands dropped to their sides. When Sloane had accomplished the division, each silently stuffed his half in his pockets.

Mary McPhee was again dancing before their eyes. Not yet was the race ended.

V



THE *Star of Muscovy* made port early on a bright Sunday morning, coming through the Golden Gate, like the clippers of yore, under her own sail, passing quarantine on the fly, so to speak, and proceeding without delay to her allotted berth at Pier 36.

But expeditious though the docking was in fact, it seemed wofully laggard to the two eager swains on board. The Twins were on edge for the final encounter. Each,

in fancy, already scurried the earth beneath him in a mad dash to be first in the presence of the widow.

For had not Mary said the first to arrive with a thousand dollars?

As the vessel drew into the dock, they came down from furling the mainsail, and lurked by the rail. He would have to make the race as he stood, sea-dressed in boots and dungarees, each decided, for it would never do to go below and put on go-ashore togs, thus giving the other the start. A moment's leeway might decide.

A good five feet of water yet separated ship and string-piece when the Twins, at the same instant, leaped for the planking. A second later they were galloping through the dock crowd toward the street. Sinister-appearing sprinters, in truth, for each possessed a pair of beautifully blackened eyes, besides other and sundry mis-adornments of feature. The dock crowd was justified in declaring—

"There go two hard cases trying to beat each other to the first drink!"

Not for a saloon, however, but for the taxi-stand at the Ferry Building, were the Twins headed.

Not so very many minutes thereafter, the very respectable company of churchgoers, parading Filbert Street on their way to worship, were, in sequence, arrested, amazed, amused and shocked, by a quite unusual disturbance of Filbert Street's Sabbath quiet.

A large, brown taxicab came whirring and banging up the street, jammed its brakes, skidded to the curb, and stopped before the row of flats old Jerry McPhee had left his widow. From the cab emerged with a bound, a piratical-looking crew of one, a big fellow, roughly dressed, with a face that seemed to have recently met with an accident. He continued his initial bound across the sidewalk toward the front steps of the McPhee domicile.

Meanwhile, came a second taxi whirring and banging up the street, to skid to the curb, and stop immediately behind car number one. From this car bounded a second pirate, whose features also appeared to have been lately remodeled by a Cubist sculptor; and this fellow continued his bounding in the direction of the mansion McPhee.

Johnny had occupied the first cab, so he was first on the steps. To be exact, his

feet touched the third and sixth steps, going up, when Charley arrived at the bottom. Then, very abruptly, positions were reversed, for Charley reached out his long arms, grabbed Johnny's coat-tail, and gave as hearty a heave-ho as he had ever given a topsail halyard.

Whereupon, and instantly, Johnny reached out his arms, and placed them around Charley. The latter squirmed around and likewise embraced, and they thus bunny-hugged together up the steps, and smashed against Mary McPhee's front door. This smash obviated the necessity to ring the doorbell, for the door squawked on hinges, and there was a loud noise of breaking glass.

The inmates thus summoned, the Twins, still in close embrace, proceeded to descend the steps by lying down and rolling. And when they had bumped off the bottom step, and writhed together on the sidewalk, they furnished the circle of aforementioned churchgoers with an excellent illustration of what the fight on the *Muscovy* would have been, but for Mr. Sloane and his belaying-pin. For Charley chewed Johnny's nose seriously, and with malice aforethought, and Johnny earnestly endeavored to remove Charley's auditory appendages from the latter's skull.

The ejaculations of the horrified elect were unheard by the warriors, but the mist of battle was not impervious to the shrill command that presently came from the direction of the house.

"Stop that at once! Do you hear? The ideal!"

Beloved accents! The Twins desisted their labors, and scrambled erect. It was sweet Mary, herself, they sheepishly faced, as she stood in the midst of the ruins of her door, grim-faced and arms akimbo.

"Well, we're back, Mary—" commenced Charley.

"Back! So I see!" grimly commented the lady, surveying her ruined stoop. "And up to your old tricks, just as soon as you get ashore! The ideal! Showed the whole neighborhood you are back, haven't you? Suppose the police will know it by night. Ideal! Come up here without even a clean shirt on, and start to fight! Ought to be in jail!"

"But—Mary, it was for you—" faltered Johnny.

"For me?" was the snapping retort,

"Don't you dare, Johnny Swarfelt! If you two hoodlums insinuate that I'm mixed up in your fights, I'll have you arrested! The ideal!"

"But—but Mary!" protested Johnny. "We done what you said. We come back, and I got that thousand."

"I got it too," interjected Charley.

"What?" exclaimed Mary, blankly. "You have a thousand? Both of you? Well, I'll be switched!"

Her expression softened a bit as she regarded for a moment the two eager, battered faces uplifted to her. Then she turned, and sent her lifted voice into the house—and her voice lost none of its shrillness or authority.

"Luigi!" she called.

"Yes, my love!" came faintly from within.

"It's those two hoodlums back again," continued Mary. "They've broken the door glass. You come right down here with a broom and dustpan, and clean up this mess!"

"But—but, my love!" came out to the Twins, and there was more that was inaudible.

"No, they won't," responded Mary. "The ideal! They won't touch you—I should just like to see them try it! You come right down here!"

The Twins gaped at each other with mutual amazement. They gaped still more when the voice from within materialized by Mary's side in the form and features of the well-remembered Mr. Scandini. It was the same Luigi they had taken their heart troubles to, upon whose advice they had acted. Yet to the Twins' startled eyes he was not quite the same Luigi of the barber shop.

The crisp curl of his hair was not so crisp, and the blithesome heart-doctor's jauntiness had been replaced by an air of subdued meekness. He carried broom and dustpan, and handled them as though well practised in their use. He cast a dubious glance at the open-mouthed pair on the sidewalk, and commenced briskly to sweep up the splintered glass.

It was Charley who first found tongue.

"Mary, who—who's him?" he demanded.

"My husband!" defiantly replied she. "And if you two start a roughhouse, I'll call the police! I married him the day after I got rid of you two pests!"

The Twins gaped some more. When he had recovered breath, Johnny ventured timidly—

"But, Mary—you said—you promised—"

"I promised nothing," interrupted Mary. "I know what I said, and I expressly *promised* nothing. I said that the first one to come to me with a thousand dollars would hear some news. Didn't I? Well, so you shall. You actually have a thousand each? Well, I can't get over that—you must have sandbagged somebody! This is what I intended to tell you: that I would take that thousand as first payment on the *Vixen*, at a price of twenty-five hundred. But now that you each have a thousand, I'll take two thousand cash for her.

"But I sha'n't talk business with you on Sunday. You go clean yourselves up, and come down to the chandlery tomorrow—sober, mind—and we'll fix things up. Luigi! You sweep those corners! And don't you dare throw it in the street—you carry it right through the house to the garbage-can!"

Whereupon Mrs. Scandini, formerly McPhee, presented her back, and went indoors.

Luigi followed after her, carrying the gathered debris. But Luigi lingered a moment at the door, and favored the Twins with a long, meaning look. That look meant several mingled emotions, the Twins sensed, but triumph was not among them.

Silently, the Twins ambled down the street.

Two blocks away, Charley delivered himself.

"The blasted dago!" he said, but more in wonder than anger.

Johnny grunted, then he grinned.

"Say, he was always the boss, wasn't he? 'Be firm!' Hol!"

They glanced quickly at each other, and away. On the face of each rested, for a moment, that expression assumed by rescued persons, when realizing for the first time the closeness of escape.

This expression, on Charley's face, suddenly gave way to one of awesome understanding. He stopped stock still, and faced Johnny.

"Say—the *Vixen*," he said, slowly. "We got her! By gosh, old horse, d'ye *sabe*? No more lousy fo'c's'les for us!"

"You said something," responded Johnny. "We win, anyway."



The Red Witch

by

Farnham Bishop
and
Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur

Authors of "The Iron Arm," "The Quest of Gaimar the Grim," etc.

"**D**ROP that knife, you limb of Judas!"

Odo the Lawless glared at his brother out of little, evil, red-rimmed eyes. His angry face, little more human than that of an ape, was tense with passion; his huge, hairy hands gripped the edge of the table.

Sigismundo smiled a soft, dangerous smile.

"You are frightened, dear brother," he purred.

Odo's bestial eyes opened with amazement; almost stupefaction. That the man should live who thought him afraid! His jaw set; his right hand stole to his sword-hilt. But Sigismundo saw, and though himself no coward, forestalled the flash of steel he knew would follow.

"No, not frightened," he conceded, "but too suspicious. I meant no harm." And half-turning in his seat, he began to whittle the massive back of the crude chair.

Odo laughed shortly, and sat down again.

"Steel in your hands is enough to make any one suspicious," he observed. "More than once, you remember, that knife of yours has drawn my blood, as mine has drawn yours. We have not been fond or faithful brothers, my lad."

"True enough," Sigismundo answered carelessly. "Besides, this accursed wind has ruffled your temper today."

For eight and forty hours the sirocco had been blowing, that hot, stifling wind that fills the Sicilian air with leaden haze,

and tries men's spirits to the breaking-point. Even here, in the comparative cool and comfort of the wine-shop of the Seven Divine Mercies, sunk below the level of the dirty, disreputable alley, and walled with damp stone, the rasping, gusty inferno outside made itself felt. The table at which the brothers sat was coated with fine, brick-red dust from the African desert across the sea.

Odo and Sigismundo, however, soothed by the coolness and the reek of cheap wine and unwashed bodies within, were still raw with the irritation of a long day's ride in the dusty, smothering heat, and were even more suspicious of each other than their many past quarrels and mutual treacheries warranted. Outlaws both, and for good cause, they preyed on the peaceful countryside with no greater ferocity than they displayed toward each other. Their infrequent meetings usually ended in bloodshed; only when one of them scented game too strong for him to pull down unaided did they hunt together, and on such occasions each watched the other jealously for signs of false play.

The moment they had descended the stair of the Seven Divine Mercies, the cut-purses and brigands who haunted the place, recognizing them and reading their ill-temper in their eyes, had slunk away with all quietness and dispatch. For these two were the master-thieves of all Sicily; the murderer-barons; their names were as terrifying to lesser rascals as to peaceful men.

Half a glance would have shown that they were twins—huge, hairy giants both, with wide, swinging shoulders, dangling arms that bulged and writhed with muscle, chests thick like an ape's, and short, bowed legs that still had all the ease and strength of a panther's. Yet, brothers of one birth as they were, there was that about them which made them fear and hate each other as they did no other living thing.

Sigismundo, a trifle slighter of figure and less animal of brow, waited with impatience well concealed by a contemptuous silkiness. He was determined not to put himself to the disadvantage of asking questions; his brother had sought the interview, let him make the best of it. Methodically Sigismundo sliced at the chair, slowly put away his knife, and began to polish his helmet with the under side of his baldric.

"You spilled your wine when you shied at my knife," he mocked. "It is not good wine, but you paid for it. Why should you doubt me, when you yourself sent for me? Is it likely I would quarrel with you before I learned the reason for this rendezvous?"

"I doubt you not," Odo answered sullenly, drawing pictures with his forefinger in the spilled wine.

His face, eloquent of the evil thoughts behind it, lowered beneath his matted hair like a sulky gorilla's; his little eyes gleamed redly under his retreating forehead.

"How old is Arnulfo of Rocca Forte?" he shot out at last.

"Let me see. Roger was crowned King of Sicily in 1130. Five years before, Arnulfo married Roma Marcellini, receiving the title of count from King Roger—for so he called himself even before he ambushed the Pope and forced his Holiness to crown him—as a marriage gift. On the marriage register—which I stole from the cathedral in Palermo for its golden binding—Arnulfo gave his age as forty-two. It is now 1148; that would make him sixty-five."

Odo drank out the lees of his wine.

"If I had your head for figures—" he said.

"Or for anything else, head of a pig," Sigismundo jeered. "But why are you concerned with Arnulfo's age?"

"Sixty-five," Odo mused, "and stricken in health. He can not last much longer."

"Well?"

Odo thrust his prognathous jaw forward till it almost touched his brother's.

"If I had twenty sturdy fellows of the right sort," he whispered thickly, "I could make myself master of one of the fairest richest fiefs in Sicily."

Sigismundo's coarse lips twitched with greed, but he shook his head.

"You are drunk," he declared. "No fief that is worth taking can be got so easily."

"Rocca Forte can."

Sigismundo threw back his head and howled with merriment. Watching him, Odo grew angry, and made uncouth sounds in his throat. His brother, still laughing, threw up one hand.

"Keep your temper," he urged. "The saints may have made you mad, but your madness is diverting. Tell your tale; I listen."

Furious as he was at being laughed at, Odo was too full of his subject to sulk.

"Then take that smile off your lips. Good. All I need is to get the girl into my hands——"

Sigismundo could contain himself no longer.

"All you need! Get the girl!" he gasped. "Get Fulvia of Rocca Forte? Now God help your wits! Did not Fulk the Black try to get her, and Ricoberto? Where are Fulk and Ricoberto now? One is food for ravens, and the other lies drowned in a brook!

"Alberic the Lombard thought to seize her. Where is Alberic? Dead, with Arnulfo's sword through him. Why, you leaden-pated fool, it is madness to meddle with Arnulfo's daughter! If you yearn for death, at least give yourself the chance to die fighting. Try to take King Roger's eye-teeth from his living head, pluck the beard of the Sultan, propose marriage to the daughter of the Emperor of Byzantium, fight a troop of hashish-eating Seljuks—but leave Fulvia of Rocca Forte alone!"

It was Odo's turn to laugh.

"Do you believe that peasant-babble?" he scoffed. "Those silly tales of magic?"



"MAGIC it was," Sigismundo retorted seriously, "black magic of the worst sort. Fulk, Ricoberto, Alberic, Gaimar the Grim, they are all dead, are they not? A good friend of mine was Gaimar—many a raid have I planned with him, many a town have we sacked together. Having a castle of his own, enjoying the king's favor by reason of his hundred

Norman men-at-arms, he helped me greatly. We shared both danger and spoil; I took the blame, as a poor outlaw must, and he hid me when the chase was too warm. Poor Gaimar, may the devil be kind to him.

"I talked with his peasants, and with one of Fulvia's own riders. They all tell the same tale: they saw him hanging from one of his own oaks, strung up by the girdle, while she sat her horse and laughed at him. No one was there to help her, and Gaimar was as strong as you——"

"Lies!" barked Odo, his pride touched on the raw. "I am the strongest man in Sicily, and I will prove it on the body of him who dares deny it!"

It was a truthful boast. No other man on the island was a match for Odo, not even his sinewy brother. Their father, a renegade Norman monk of herculean physique, had run away to Sicily with a half-Frankish, half-Norwegian peasant woman, and there had begotten the monstrous brothers. Sigismundo was a giant of bone and sinew, but he knew Odo for his physical superior, and held his own with him only by virtue of a little more intellect, a fraction more of cranial development. He was not quite so near the beast.

"Gaimar was almost as strong," he amended. "Yet consider how he died. You can not tell me that a woman, without the devil's aid, could do that to a man like Gaimar. She played with him. Every one knows she had on the garments of a man—the mail she captured from Ricoberto, also by black magic—and is it not well known that a woman in man's clothing can work witchcraft? It is against religion, the way she weaves spells for the undoing of men. The church should put an end to such deeds!"

Odo snorted scornfully.

"Witchcraft!" he jeered. "She has you frightened. I have no faith in magic, no patience with the foolish talk that makes devilry out of woman's cunning. She got Gaimar to tie himself up, most like, as a pretty woman can make a fool do anything. But I am a man, a man of inches and strength, with a cool head. I defy her to try her cunning on me!"

"A good beating will cure her of witchcraft, and I am the fellow to give it to her. A strong arm and a keen sword: the blade for Arnulfo, the fist for his daughter—and soon she will run to my whistle.

"Listen: Old Iron-Arm and the girl are in Castrocavalli, where they have stayed since Fulvia captured it from Gaimar. Day after tomorrow early, they set out for Rocca Forte, leaving a young popinjay from France to hold Castrocavalli castle for them. The road is lonely, and narrow where it crosses the mountains. One of the grooms at Rocca Forte told me, his tongue being loosened by drink which I bought him.

"I have ten good fellows of my own, but I want more. Arnulfo may be old, but his arm is as iron as ever, and I dare not fail. If I had twenty more——"

"Alberic the Lombard had four-score," Sigismundo interrupted.

"But the fool attacked Arnulfo in his own castle, and got his deserts. A wise hunter does not invade the lion's den. Cunning and surprise are the weapons of Rocca Forte; I will turn those weapons against them, and add one of my own: strength of arm such as they have never met before. All Fulvia's wits and her father's valor will not avail them against this hand. I shall ambush them, spring out upon them before the escort can get clear of the pack-mules, and carve them to crums—all but the girl.

"Her I shall take to a sure place, where a priest will be waiting. She has long been ripe for marriage. Besides, King Roger is anxious to have her settled for life, for her father may die soon, and leave a good fief lying unprotected. Roger does not want so important a stronghold to fall into the hands of the first rebellious bandit."

Sigismundo laughed nastily.

"Oh, I know I am both rebel and bandit myself," Odo admitted, "which is just why I want her and her good castle. Once I am a land-owner, I can say to the king—'I have renounced my godless life, your Majesty; I repent, and crave your gracious leave to become your servant.' Will he refuse? Not he! A good, strong, faithful man in charge of a vital point in his defenses: that is all he cares about. Within two days the girl will be my wife, and you may stake your salvation on that."

"Fulvia may have something to say in the matter," Sigismundo hazarded.

"If she says anything but 'Yes, my good lord,' she will feel the weight of my fist! I tell you, I am a man, not a sugared courtier. When I want a thing, I take it,

and death to him who stands in my way! Not that I care two bezants about her, with her pretty cheeks and her red hair, but Rocca Forte is a tidbit worth fighting for!"

Sigismundo smiled slyly.

"Then, since you care only for the land and not for the woman, dear brother," he suggested, "and as you clearly expect me to furnish two-thirds of the men for your enterprise, would it not be best if I married the lady, took Castrocavalli, and gave you Rocca Forte? Oh, do not be angry. Rocca Forte is far the best of the bargain, and I am not obliged to furnish my good men for nothing. You can not go forward with the affair alone, and I can lend you twenty sturdy fellows who will stick at nothing. Then, you run less risk with another to share the blame."

Odo considered moodily.

"Very well," he assented; "let us hope this accursed wind will cease by then."



THE second day rose warm, but clear. Far away, beyond the broad plain southwest of Castrocavalli, beyond the stubble-fields and olive-groves, the sheen of water and a white blur above indicated the high, sea-girt crag and beetling castle of Rocca Forte.

Out of the plain rose a steep, well-wooded hill, its top protected from the view of dwellers below by thick ranks of trees. But there was a clearing on the very crest, and from it, squat and menacing, a thick, square tower pointed upward, black against the dazzling sun. Above its arched door, angular letters, incised deep into the weathering stone, proclaimed in Latin the title of its builders—

S P Q R. LEG. X. I.

From these battlements imperial eyes had once watched cohorts and maniples drilling on the plain; the ancient letters sang a silent epic of Rome's vanished glory, of dead men in crumbled armor, whose feet would never cross the drifted threshold more.

At the tower's foot a spring gushed from the earth, pouring out the water held in cells of porous limestone. Though it was almost the end of the dry season, the clearing was lush with juicy grass, on which thirty horses, saddled and bridled, grazed.

A good six feet of turf between them,

two bands of armed men sat eating their noon meal, and drinking out of leather bottles. One party consisted of twenty men-at-arms, the other of ten; but the ten were as sturdy ruffians as ever used dagger in the dark. All thirty were the scum of a dozen cities, the bullies of a dozen cowed countrysides. Big, weather-beaten, war-scarred, they bore in face and feature the hard, ugly brand of lawless bravos, fit to rob for a farthing, stab for a penny, and drink away the booty with innocent blood still wet upon their blades. Yet they were mirthless and suspicious, and each faction scowled at the other over the food.

Sigismundo rose from among the larger group, and made his way to the archway of the tower. Once this entrance had been far enough above the ground to require a ladder, but the accumulations of centuries had settled about it till the threshold was nearly level with the ground. A heavy gate of spiked planking, a recent addition, opened in on ponderous hinges.

As Sigismundo's figure blotted out the light, Odo came forward from within.

"Sit down," he invited. "It is comfortable enough. The path being on the south slope, they can not see us approach from the road."

Both men seated themselves on wooden stools, Odo before a crude, heavy table. Two rough pallets ran along opposite walls; a ladder led to the parapeted roof, where once a lonely legionary watched for the gleam of countless Carthaginian spears.

"My men and yours make poor comrades," Sigismundo observed anxiously. "Hardly one of them has not put hand to hilt at least once today. If the venture does not come out well, they will be at one another's throats."

"Answer for your own knaves," Odo grunted. "Not a man of mine dares raise his hand without my orders. What if they do remember times when you and I caressed each other with knives? When this is done, we may quarrel again, as we have done before; but in this matter we must keep faith. Look to it; you stand to lose as much as I."

Sigismundo nodded worriedly, and went out.

For half an hour Odo waited impatiently; then, climbing part way up the ladder, he called to the man-at-arms who watched the road.

"Nothing yet?"

"Nothing, Master."

A few minutes of silence; then—

"Three horsemen coming through the gap!"

"No more than three?" growled Odo; and, receiving confirmation, "It is not they."

Nevertheless, determined not to miss the slightest trace of his intended victims, he climbed to the parapet and looked out over the plain to the north, his eyes fixed on the notch where the highroad from Castro-cavalli to Rocca Forte crossed the mountains.

"Only three," he corroborated. "They are hawking! I see the goshawk circling above her master's head, waiting for the quarry to be flushed! What, Sigismundo! Come hither!"

At his shout, his brother ran into the tower and up the ladder.

"Is it they?" he questioned eagerly.

"No, for there are no men-at-arms, and Arnulfo does not let his daughter ride abroad without escort. But there is good sport toward: see, the hawk is off! The game rises! It is a woodcock!"

Sigismundo, ardently devoted to the noble science of falconry—as was every other Sicilian—watched the sport with as much fascination as Odo.

"Woodcock indeed!" he cried. "It is a grouse!"

"My purse against yours on that!" Odo offered.

"Done!"

"See there! How she quarters! Was there ever a grouse, or any bird but a woodcock, that doubled at such an angle? The goshawk is quite baffled. See her mount! By Saint Nicholas! The quarry has put in! The hawk points!"

Indeed the hawk was baffled. Its victim, turning sharply in flight, had dashed into a thicket; while the hawk, intent on rising high enough to pounce upon the doubling bird, lost sight of her, and would have missed her altogether, but for the telltale quivering of the thicket where the woodcock had sought refuge. So, true to its training, the hawk circled slowly above the bushes, waiting for its master to beat them, and start the quarry again.

Seeing this, the three riders left the road, and galloped their horses across the gently rising plain toward the thicket, shouting

and brandishing their arms. Every step brought them nearer to the hill and the tower. Sigismundo watched the bushes, intent on the sport, but Odo, glancing up as the riders drew nearer, started violently, and plucked his brother by the arm.

"It is they!" he whispered; and, turning to the man-at-arms:

"Bid the men mount and wait in silence. Not a sound must be made. Have Orderic and Long Bevis ride to San Pasquale for the priest. Let them take the path, for that is out of sight from the plain. Be off with you!"

In the excitement of the moment, the wager was forgotten.

The man scrambled down the ladder in hot haste. The two brothers stared at each other, their breath coming fast, their eyes dilated with excitement. Sigismundo was first to recover.

"My men will not stir without my command," he said. "I will go down and get them into the saddle."

"In silence!" Odo urged.



FIVE minutes later the whole party had mounted and ridden, as softly as they could, almost to the edge of the forest which clothed the slope. Every time a horse stumbled, or an incautious movement caused a faint jingling of mail, Odo cursed fiercely under his breath. At last they drew as near to the thinner growth as they dared, for fear of being seen too soon, and there drew rein.

The hunt was now scarcely fifty yards from them; they could see its last stages acted in the sunlit open before their eyes. The woodcock, flushed a few minutes before, quartered again almost on the verge of the wood; the hawk, as if mysteriously aware of its purpose, pounced upon the instant, and, shooting down through space like an arrow, fairly fell upon the frightened woodcock. Its claws sunk deep into the palpitating back; and beating fiercely, the quarry fell to earth in the last agony.

"Now!" whispered Sigismundo; but Odo grasped at his rein.

"I like it not!" he answered, frowning. "Where are their ten riders? What if Arnulfo has learned our plan, and this is but an ambush?"

"Fool!" hissed Sigismundo. "If they hoped to trap us, they would not come so

near. They are in our hands now. Doubtless Jaufré, Arnulfo's captain, and his men-at-arms have been left behind while their masters rode ahead for the hawking."

As it happened, he was right. Arnulfo, always a passionate hunter, had left the escort full five miles behind, with orders to find quarters for them in a certain tavern for the night; he would be back, he said, with Fulvia and the page, as soon as he had had some sport.

Odo hesitated a moment, peering out at the unsuspecting three. Arnulfo, his nostrils quivering with the excitement of the chase, dismounted to pick up the bleeding woodcock and shake off the hawk, which returned to its accustomed position on his wrist. The page sat nearby, on a small, sinewy horse of beautiful lines, ready to take the game from his master's hand. Behind them was Fulvia herself on Red Roland, her matchless horse, famed throughout the land for speed and spirit. She wore a close-fitting bodice, open at the throat; a long voluminous gown of yellow silk; a flat, blue cap crowned the braided glory of her tawny hair. Even Odo, cynical brute that he was, felt his pulses stir at her loveliness.

His victims had slipped into his hand. He had expected to ride around, and ambush them on the road beyond, relying on superior numbers to overwhelm Arnulfo's hard-fighting warriors; but here, in his very grasp, unprotected by any escort, were those whom he had schemed to entrap, unsuspecting, unprepared. As he gazed at Fulvia, his ardor mounted. Arnulfo, stooping over the fluttering birds, was not wearing his helmet; his shield dangled at his horse's flank. And the page was not even armed! Odo was about to shout, when Fulvia cried aloud and pointed straight toward him.

"Father!" she exclaimed, "I see the flash of steel! Treachery!"

Odo, stirred to recklessness by her beauty, had ventured a pace too far; and the movement had caught the sunlight and thrown it upon his armor. On the instant Arnulfo sprang to his horse, caught up shield and helmet and drew his long Norman sword, shouting an order at the page. The boy obediently snatched Red Roland's bridle, turned, and plunged his spurs into his horse's flanks. The fleet little animal

broke into a long, swift lope, the great roan thundering at his heels.

Out from the wood burst a flood of mailed warriors, the brothers at their head. Straight at the stern old count they charged, till Odo turned in his saddle, shouting:

"The girl! A golden fortune to him who takes her!"

The front rank swerved and pelted off across the field, the rest following, in full career after the swift roan and its precious burden. Arnulfo, in desperate fear for his daughter, strove to bring his own horse around; but Sigismundo rode behind him, blocking the way. Before him, Odo reined in and sat there on his huge war-horse, a statue of monstrous iniquity in steel.

Suddenly Arnulfo became a whirlwind of flashing arms and biting steel. His sword descended full on the unprotected neck of Odo's horse, and the bandit jumped clear just in time to save himself from falling with the almost beheaded animal. Wheeling swiftly, his trained charger knowing well what was expected of it, Arnulfo flung himself at Sigismundo. The latter, though no coward, was well aware of his adversary's reputation, and swerved to avoid the blow. Before he could recover, the old count was past him, and spurring his charger over the grass in desperate haste to save his daughter.

The thirty outlaws were well enough mounted; but he whose purse is longest buys the best horseflesh. Within ten minutes the rearmost of them, hearing hoof-beats behind, turned to behold a fierce old man brandishing a bloody sword at his very heels. The outlaw shrieked with terror; the next second, he was gasping out his life. On rode Arnulfo, his weapon menacing the next; but at the first man's shriek, four men had turned, caught sight of their fallen comrade and the lone pursuer, and wheeled their horses to meet him.

The old warrior rode forward dauntlessly, shield up, red sword raised. The four, ranging themselves close together, drew up boot to boot, and when he came within reach, all struck at once. But Arnulfo was no ordinary swordsman; he was trained to parry with blade as well as shield. Two blows fell upon the curved face of the triangular shield, a third was countered with the sword; the fourth glanced off the polished helmet. Then, with wondrous

speed for one so old, with the force that had earned him his title of "Arm of Iron," Arnulfo struck, once, twice, again. The outer two of his opponents reeled, and slithered off their horses; one of the others fell with four inches of steel in his heart; the fourth, with a wild, half-hearted stroke, turned to flee and was cut down in flight.

"Fulvia!" cried the old man, pressing on.

Soon three more outlaws turned to encounter him, and he was caught in a maze of flashing steel. These did not bunch, as the others had done; they buffeted him from three sides. As he parried a blow from the right, he on the left struck at Arnulfo's unguarded shoulder, and nearly tore the shield from the count's arm. Arnulfo turned upon the speaker savagely, cut him down, and turned again. But now blood trickled from his left shoulder, staining his mail. It took three minutes of precious time before he beat down the man in front, and the third outlaw, sorely wounded, sought safety in flight.

"Fulvia!" shouted the desperate father, and pressed on again. "Fulvia! Speed on! I follow!"

And Fulvia heard, above the din of hoof-beats and the clank of mail. She was now a good hundred yards ahead of the nearest pursuer, thanks to Red Roland's speed. But when that anguished cry burst upon her ears, instead of speeding her flight, as the count intended, she glanced back, turned, and drove Roland quartering across the tide of pursuit, riding back in fierce anxiety to be near her father, to help him, if she only could. The horde that followed turned after her, streaming across the plain at an acute angle to their former line, in their haste, the foremost fouled and crashed together. Two men were thrown; three or four seriously retarded, but the rest swept on.

Still Red Roland gained, till Fulvia could see her father, desperately engaged with three horsemen, and rode in to meet him. Perhaps fifty yards separated them when Fulvia saw a great black horse laboring up behind the count, carrying two huge riders. Straight on they rode, paying no apparent attention to her or the rout following her; their swords gleaming in their hands, they sought only Arnulfo. With a cry of fear, Fulvia realized her helplessness to aid; till a thought flashed upon her consciousness.

Full at the backs of the three with whom her father was engaged she drove Roland; and, just as the roan thundered down upon them, she shouted in his ear. The horse flung up both forefeet, and brought them down upon the flank of an outlaw's mount. Horse and rider fell, Roland lashing out at their prostrate forms with both feet. Instantly Fulvia stooped, snatched up the fallen man's sword, and drove the keen point through the second ruffian's neck. At the same moment, Arnulfo split the helmet of the third, tumbling him into the dirt, and turned to meet the brothers.



LEAPING from the black horse, Odo ran upon the old count, while Sigismundo spurred forward to ride him down. Cleverly avoiding Sigismundo's sweeping blow, Arnulfo brought his long sword down upon Odo's shoulder. But his arm was weary; the blow fell glancing, and Odo heeded its impact no more than a feather.

His own weapon, urged home by the mighty arm behind it, smashed through Arnulfo's shield, just as Sigismundo ran his sword up to the hilt in the flank of the count's horse. The animal's shudder warned the old man, who leaped free as it fell dead, but he could not avoid the crushing force of Odo's next blow. The cruel steel bit through armor and flesh, and Arnulfo's left arm hung helpless.

Fulvia, beside herself with grief and terror, flung herself at Sigismundo, the captured sword gleaming in her hand. It sheared through the metal rings above the third rib, and drew blood, but without inflicting a serious wound. Odo, meantime, had felt the prick of Arnulfo's point through his mail three times, but faintly, for the old man was exhausted. His blows fell more slowly, and Odo was tireless. A sudden stroke sent the helmet spinning from Arnulfo's head, and his head was reeling. With a shout of triumph, the bandit left his crippled adversary, ran swiftly over to Fulvia—who was parrying Sigismundo's terrific strokes in desperation—tore the weapon from her hand, and snatched her to his breast.

With an ugly grin, Sigismundo left them, wiping the sweat from his eyes, and stalked over to the drooping figure of the old count. Arnulfo roused to meet him, raised his sword with feeble hand, and struck. The

blow found its mark, but did not even cut the mail. The next instant Sigismundo's heavy blade fell, sheared through the brain, and split the skull to the chin. Arnulfo of Rocca Forte, hero of a hundred battles, warrior of the Iron Arm, was dead.

Odo, holding the struggling Fulvia in his enormous arms, whirled to meet his outwitted horsemen.

"So," he snarled, "in your eagerness to get the girl and the gold, you let the boy get clear! Fools! We shall have Jaufré and his spears down on us now! Away to the tower!"

He climbed into Red Roland's saddle, still holding the girl close, and led the way back. Sigismundo, cantering alongside, said softly:

"If Jaufré and his ten had been with them, they too would have been dead now, and the leaderless folk of Rocca Forte would be only too glad to take as their master him who marries this pretty piece of goods. But the boy will get word to Jaufré, who will send in haste for all his company, and besiege us in the tower. It behooves us therefore to get the marriage over as soon as the priest reaches the tower, and then put as many miles between Rocca Forte and us as horseflesh can cover. It will be hard to take Rocca Forte now, unless Jaufré forgets this business sooner than I think he will."

"Hard? With the girl married to me? With her lands legally mine? Will Jaufré hold out against an edict from the king?"

"Married to you!" Sigismundo cried. "Was it not agreed she should be my wife?"

"Aye, but I have changed my mind," Odo grinned.

Sigismundo started to protest, but thought better of it. There would be time to settle that question later, when Odo was less on his guard, and Jaufré silenced.

"Here," Odo resumed, looking down at Fulvia, "is an excellent hostage for Jaufré's good behavior. He will not attack while she is in our hands."

Fulvia had ceased to struggle. She had seen the fearful stroke that cut her father down, and her heart was crushed with grief. She was weary, heartbroken, beaten. But out of the horror in her mind one thought, stronger than her fear for herself, urged her to speak. So, without looking up at her captor, she asked:

"Will you leave him here for the wolves? Will you not give him burial?"

Odo reined in.

"A goodly thought!" he exclaimed. "Little time for it, but—he fought well. Here fellows! Ride back for the old man's body! Bring it to the tower!"

And so the savage procession made its way back, the monstrous brothers leading with the wretched prisoner, the torn body of brave Arnulfo, borne on a shield, bringing up the rear.

Sigismundo leaned over to whisper to Odo.

"Now his men will not know for certain that he is dead, and our hand is strengthened so much the more.

"That is wisdom," his brother commented.

Too soon the tower was reached, and the sorrowing girl thrust unceremoniously inside.

"Now," barked Odo to the horsemen, "you varlets will do well enough outside till this matter is settled. You and I, Sigismundo, will go in and arrange our differences. Keep a shrewd watch, there; at the first sign of Jaufré's men, report to me. Ho there, Priest! What? Is the dog not here? Curse him! Doubtless he and the two fools I sent for him are drinking themselves asleep in some tavern!"

Muttering, he went inside.

Arnulfo's body having been laid in a corner and covered with a cloak, the brothers sat down, each watching the other furtively. Odo wearied first, and rising, fetched a full wine-skin and two wooden goblets.

"Drink," he invited his brother. "Talking is dry work."

Hot, thirsty, and somewhat weary, Sigismundo complied; and Odo was not long in following his example. They drank freely, filling as soon as the cups were emptied. Their very uncertainty of the outcome between them stimulated them to down cup after cup, and their ill-temper returned as they drank.

"Now then," Odo began, "this girl was promised to you; but I like her the better the more I see of her, and I will have her myself. Castrocavalli is enough for you."

Fulvia, at bay in the corner of the room, gazed with wide, panic-stricken eyes. She knew well enough what they wanted with her; but the cruel, brutal words beat the

apathy from her mind. Loathing possessed her as she watched the bestial pair and listened to them quarreling over her.

As Sigismundo reached out his empty cup, Odo started up, suspicious of violence. But Sigismundo only laughed nastily, and drank his brother's wine. Silently, Odo poured out again for both.

"Give you both Rocca Forte and the girl?" Sigismundo smiled. "Not while I have a dozen men outside to your six, brother."

"Those twelve may be masterless before you can call them," the other retorted; and Sigismundo, knowing his brother's strength, was silent.

"What did I tell you?" Odo boasted thickly. "Did I not say that sheer strength was bound to tame this witch? And have we not tamed her? And strength—my strength—will make her mine! The priest will surely be here before nightfall to marry us; and then you may go whistle to the wind, my brave brother!"

Sigismundo flushed, but forced a conciliatory smile.

"It is against religion for brothers to quarrel," he suggested. "Will you throw dice for her?"

Greatly to his surprise, Odo agreed. Each produced dice from his pouch, rattled them in his helmet, and threw in turn. Odo throwing first, turned up double sixes; then Sigismundo, with the same result. Odo sprang to his feet, his hand on his sword.

"Softly, lad," counseled Sigismundo. "If my dice were loaded, so were yours."

They sat down again, glaring at each other. And though Sigismundo feared Odo's strength, Odo feared his brother's superior mentality perhaps more. For fully half an hour they watched each other, drank, and watched.

Fulvia, her dumb despair giving way to pressing terror at the tension, and the certainty that the next hour might be big with her own fate, sought counsel in her troubled mind, which had never failed her before. But she had never before been a prisoner, never before so absolutely in the power of her foes. She glanced from one brother to the other, with the eyes of a hunted thing. By some strange logic, there came into her mind the thought of the bird she had seen brought down by her father's hawk that same noon; now, not

three hours later, she was helpless in the clutch of crueler, more merciless hawks, and her fate would be worse than death.

She thought, with piteous tears, of the father she had lost, the father whose strong arms had guarded her, whose tenderness had cared for her so long. Past scenes, fragments of the life that was gone, tortured her mind with her irreparable loss.

Then, suddenly assuming significance, there flashed into her memory a tale he had once told her: how two Norse kings, brothers like these men, had stirred each other to hate, over the wine-cups, by boasting one to the other of their superiority. These ruffians who held her captive were too shrewd, being Normans, to allow her to play upon their jealousy—too shrewd for wine or greed alone to overmaster them. But if wine and jealousy together. . . . She would try it, at least.

In the midst of their tense, drunken silence she spoke, dissembling her grief for the sake of her salvation.

"You have slain my father," she began in unsteady tones, "robbed me of my sole protection. Now you sit there quarreling over me like children, inciting each other to madness, till your anger will end in blood. What if you should slay each other, and leave me yet more helpless? This is folly.

"Since you have won me, one or the other of you must replace the protector you took from me. I must make the best of a bad bargain. Should you not give me some choice between you? Since I must marry one, may I not choose the better? And how can I tell which is the better, unless you recount to me the deeds of valor which each of you has done?"

"Why not settle with the sword who is the better man?" Odo broke in.

"A chance blow, a slip on the wine-stained floor, might give victory to the poorer man," Fulvia countered. "I have to think of my estate; I must marry the best man in Sicily. Not merely the strongest, not merely the shrewdest, but the best. Tell me what you have done, that I may decide."

Suspicion gleamed in Sigismundo's eyes; but Odo, strong, stupid, and drunk, fell readily into the trap. He began to boast, shamelessly, of his many deeds of villainy, rehearsed the murders, the treacheries, the single combats and the mêlées in which

he had played the disgraceful central part. At first wary, Sigismundo was swept away by the nauseating recital, and launched into a glowing description of his own crimes. Volubly they bragged, while the girl sat looking at them with eyes of loathing.

First one, then the other, they boasted; now and then they interrupted each other fiercely; more than once they gave the lie direct, and sprang to their feet, hands on hilts. But Fulvia, too desperate to risk a false start, held their growing wrath and hatred of each other in check, restrained them, and thus fanned the fury between them hotter. And frequently she threw a glance of coquetry, or an encouraging smile, to one of the rascals, to whet his boastful pride and stimulate his frenzy.



AT LAST, in the midst of one of Odo's tirades, Sigismundo, his brain heated with jealousy and drink, broke in furiously.

"You lie, dog!" he shouted. "It was I who did that, while you lay in drunken slumber! You cheated me of the fruits, but I did the deed!"

With the howl of a beast, Odo caught his brother by the throat. Knowing that her time had come, Fulvia sprang to the door, slammed it in the faces of the excited warriors outside, dropped the bar into place, and set her back against it.

Tearing himself loose, Sigismundo ran at her.

"Unbar the door!" he roared.

Fulvia laughed in his face.

"Your brother is the better man!" she taunted.

¶ Sigismundo grasped her roughly by the shoulder. In an instant Odo's sword was out.

"Touch her not!" he shouted.

Sigismundo turned upon him, drew his sword with lightning swiftness and cried aloud:

"Without there! Break down the door!"

In response the shout of men rang out, fists, sword-hilts, and spear-butts rang against the door.

"Treachery!" cried Odo to his own backers outside, parrying his brother's stroke.

As they fenced, Sigismundo's foot struck against his shield. Stooping under cover of the table-corner, he snatched it up, and presented its protection to his brother's

blade, thus offsetting Odo's giant strength. To and fro the twin brothers battled, their swords clashing and grinding together.

Outside, one of Sigismundo's men thrust his shoulder against the barred door; one of Odo's thrust him aside; some one used a knife—then murder and confusion.

Unshielded, Odo was forced to retreat before Sigismundo's repeated blows. His chain-mail was cut through in several places, the blood ran down over its links. But the strength of his arm half-turned the blows before they struck, so that the wounds were slight. And when Odo struck, his slighter brother felt the terrific impact as if he had been hit by a battering-ram. In his turn forced to give ground, he half-stumbled, and involuntarily lowered his guard.

Instantly Odo tore his shield in two with one terrific stroke; but before he could recover, Sigismundo struck the helmet from his head. Up and down they staggered, striking wide now as the heat of combat drove the wine-fumes to their brains. At last a half-aimed blow beat down Sigismundo's sword-arm, cut through his helmet, and crushed him to the floor, stunned. Falling, he struck with all the weight of his two hundred and fifty pounds against the table, overturning and smashing it.

Bending over the unconscious man, Odo shortened his sword to deliver the fatal thrust. As he poised the weapon, there came a flash, an explosion in his brain, and he sank senseless over his stunned brother. Above him, with heaving breast, and eyes gleaming with hate, stood Fulvia, one bloodied leg of the smashed table clenched in her hand.

The din of arms and the shouting outside had ceased. For a moment Fulvia waited, listening intently for what was taking place without, but her eyes fixed on the prostrate figures of the brothers. Voices came to her ears, in low, urgent talk, the words of which she could not make out through the barred door. The fight outside must, she knew, have ended in a triumph for one party, presumably the more numerous.

Soon the victors, hearing no noise within, and anxious for their leader, would be thundering at the door. If they broke their way in, it would go hard with her. Vile as the brothers were, she would be safer with them than in the hands of a score of leaderless bandits. And there was

no escape; the very door by which she must go out would let them in.

Odo and Sigismundo were still unconscious. In breathless haste she gathered the splintered shield of one and the helmets of both, plucked the purses from the outlaws' girdles, thrust her arm through the shield-strap, and scrambled up the ladder.

As she appeared on the battlements, a loud shout of amazement greeted her. Looking down, she saw the bodies of five men, hacked and bloody, lying on the ground full sprawl, or twisted in the agony of death; four men, the remnant of Odo's smaller band, were bound hand and foot. Eight or nine more stood as if petrified by surprise at the sight of her, the stripped trunk of a tree ready in their hands. They had been on the point of battering down the door when she appeared.

But now, not one of them stirred; they gazed at her with open mouths and pale faces. For an instant she too was seized with astonishment; then enlightenment came to her. She knew the reputation for witchcraft she enjoyed in the minds of the peasants; knew, too, how superstitious the ignorant bandits were. As she stood there, the trophies of her enemies in her hands, her eyes fierce, her hair disheveled, she looked like the witch men called her. Her best chance, she knew, lay in strengthening this impression.

"Behold!" she cried, and threw shield and helmets over the battlements to the ground. "Do ye know these? The fools who wore them are dead, having been forced by my crafts to slay each other. Have ye not heard that I am a witch?"

"Ye had best go before I turn my witchcraft against you. Already some of you, I see, have shared your masters' fate. Yet I will be gracious to you. Here is gold; take it, and go at once, lest I send you also to Satan!"

And she cast down to them the purses of Odo and Sigismundo, still fat with the spoils of recent pillage.

A moment the astounded men stared from her to the purses, and back again. Then the boldest, a lean lantern-jawed thief with a broken nose, demanded craftily.

"Will you swear to give us both the gold and our lives, if we go?"

"If ye go swiftly."

"Will you swear on the cross?" the thief

persisted, a cunning light in his eye.

The trick was so transparent that Fulvia laughed, albeit, a little hysterically.

"Do witches swear by holy things?" she returned. "I swear, not on the cross—and here she affected to shudder—"but by the flames of hell!"

While the other ruffians stole swift glances of terror at one another, the broken-nosed knave snatched up both bags of gold, ran to where the great horse Roland was tethered, tore the bridle free, leaped into the saddle and spurred away. Let the others mount and pursue their fastest, they could never overtake Red Roland—and when they returned, angry and empty-handed, it would bode ill for Fulvia.

"Roland! Ho, Roland! To me!"

Sweetly and clearly the girl's voice called from the tower, as it had called from the gate of the pasture where she had given him the first training of his colthood. And as he had turned and come to her then, so came he now, despite the wrenching of the cruel bit and the rowels that tore his flanks. With but one hand free for the reins, the cursing outlaw could not control the raging brute that carried him helpless back to the foot of the tower, pitched him out of the saddle, and trampled him to death. From the burst money-bags, blood-stained gold pieces rolled in every direction over the turf.

"Snatch them and flee!" cried Fulvia, stifling her horror and quieting Roland with a word. "Let none tarry or take more than his share, lest I loose this demon of mine on him also!"

That she was indeed a witch and Roland her familiar demon, none doubted and none disobeyed her command. Clutching the red gold in red, trembling fingers, the seven survivors of Sigismundo's band fled as fast as their horses could carry them away from the accursed tower.



ROUSED by the fresh air from the opened door, Odo stirred, and opened his eyes. He found himself lying flat on his back—he had turned as he fell beneath the blow from the table-leg—across the motionless body of the still unconscious Sigismundo. Now, as he opened his eyes, Odo started and then lay still.

Above him, with one foot planted on his broad chest, stood the girl he had crushed

so helplessly to his breast; but now she was not so helpless. In her hand she held his own sword, and the point of that sword rested against the shrinking flesh of his own throat. He knew he could easily throw off her puny weight; but he did not dare, for the light in her eyes told him death would follow any such attempt. She had but to lean upon the pommel to nail him to the floor. More to gain time than to hear the answer to the question that perplexed him, he asked hoarsely—

"Who felled me?"

"I," the girl answered.

"You? But how?"

"Have you not heard that I am a witch?" she retorted.

For a moment his superstitious nature almost accepted this explanation; but he reflected:

"If she were a witch, why did she let me slay her father? Why did she let me take her captive?"

Memory returned, and he recalled the shrewd way in which she had goaded him to fight his brother. After all, she had used nothing but human cunning, as he had said to Sigismundo. And somehow she, girl that she was, had overthrown him, the strongest man in Sicily!

"Let me up!" he commanded roughly, hoping to frighten her.

"If you stir once more, you die!" she answered; and there was no mistaking the deadly earnest in her tones.

"What will you do with me?" he asked anxiously.

"I shall give you over to justice."

Slowly raising the sword-point, she held the heavy blade ready to strike at the first sign of treachery.

"Roll over on your face," she ordered, "and try no tricks."

Slowly, unwillingly, Odo obeyed.

"Now, without rising, take off your coat of mail."

There was no help for it. It was an awkward task, too, involving desperate struggles to keep the none too flexible mail from jamming about his throat and choking him. Reaching backward, he caught hold of the slack, pulled it up over his back, and slowly, painfully, wriggled out of the mail shirt. Now he was twice as helpless as he had been before; not only his throat, but his whole trunk, was vulnerable. A fair stroke anywhere would deal him a mortal

blow. But the knowledge of that menacing sword-point mastered him.

"Turn over again," she bade him.

When he had complied, she said:

"You slew my father brutally and treacherously, in my very sight. There lies his body, torn and bloody. I had thought to hand you over to my men for execution, but the sight of his poor corpse has turned my heart to stone. I will kill you now, with my own hand."

Odo's courage turned to water.

"Mercy!" he shrieked. He, who had never asked mercy of any man, was now too panic-stricken to feel shame at asking it of a woman. "Mercy! Slay me not yet, with all my sins unshriven! Kill not body and soul together! Let me have a priest!"

Fulvia smiled cruelly.

"I call to mind that you sent for a priest for another purpose," she mocked. "He might give you the final absolution if he were here. Yet it is a long way to San Pasquale, and doubtless he was not prepared to come. No, I shall kill you now, with all the weight of your sins upon you. Did you not slay my father so, without the last ministrations?"

"Your father is with the blessed saints in heaven!" pleaded Odo. "His life was clean; mine has been most foul and bloody. I am not fit to die, as he was."

Not his entreaties, but her own womanhood, was disarming Fulvia. If he had so much as stirred, or given the faintest sign of a struggle, she would have plunged his own sword into his defenseless body. But she could not cut down an unresisting man, however vile he was. For all her brave words, she was powerless to do this thing.

Then, too, if she slew him, she would have no choice but to kill Sigismundo also; and he was still unconscious, for his brother's glancing blow had crushed in the top of his skull. Moreover—and the thought had more than a little weight with her—Odo had purposed to marry her, and even sent for the priest for that very purpose—when he might have done still worse. Decision came to her. Stepping aside, but holding the sword in readiness, she addressed the whining bully.

"I will give you a chance to save your soul; but wo to you if you meditate treachery! Pick up your brother, throw him over your shoulder, and go before me out the door."

His heart trembling with the fear of hell-fire, Odo got up, hoisted the limp Sigismundo over his shoulder, and, still dizzy with pain, staggered outside. Fulvia threw a last, pitiful glance of farewell at her father's corpse, and followed him, calling Roland's name. The faithful horse came trotting up.

As she stood behind him, and turned to mount, Odo saw his chance. Casting down his brother as if he had been a sack of corn, the outlaw spun 'round on his heel, and head down, rushed at Fulvia with awkward speed.

But she was ready; never, for an instant, had she trusted him. As he turned, she struck out with all her strength, and the force of his own rush imparted power to the blow. The broad flat of the blade smote full on the side of his right temple, in the very spot where she had struck him with the table-leg.

Down he went again across his brother; but Odo's ape-like skull was strong, and after a few seconds he was ready to rise once more. By this time, however, Fulvia was in the saddle, and Roland was doing a devil's dance about the two prostrate men. As Odo stirred, the rein was slacked ever so little, so that two great hoofs beat, ever so lightly, against his upturned back.

"Shall we trample you to death, or will you pick up your brother and go before me?" the girl said quietly.

Odo shouldered his fraternal burden and walked.

"The next time, fool, it will be the edge!" she admonished him.

As he staggered on, he turned once to look at her. The declining sun shone redly on her relentless face, and turned the tawny gold of her hair to a flaming copper-red.

"The witch!" he groaned. "The Red Witch!"

Crushed in spirit, he made no further attempt at resistance. Though his brother, whose faint groans gave witness to returning consciousness, bore heavily upon him, and, weak with wounds as he was, wrung cries of torture from his lips, Odo stumbled on. Disobedience meant instant death—death with eternal damnation. Rather than that, he walked straight on to the gallows that he knew awaited; rather than that, he carried his own brother to the gibbet.

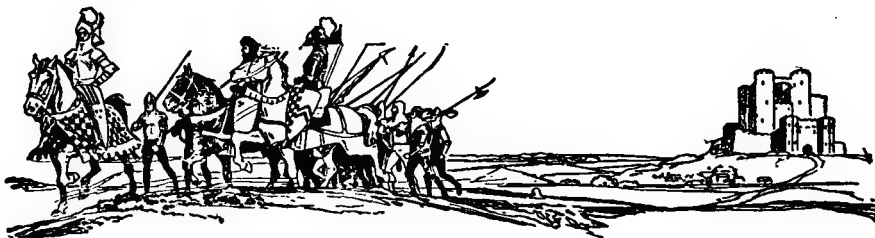


JAUFRE, thundering down the road at the head of sixty galloping men-at-arms, wild with anxiety for his master and mistress, met the procession in the last glow of the sunset. A shapeless, monstrous mass, that dripped blood as it lurched forward, and cried and moaned with two tongues, was driven on before a great horse, on whose back sat a girl with a red sword in her hand.

Dropping the sword, as Jaufré reined up beside her, Fulvia fell forward, sobbing, on his broad breast. When the first passion of her tense grief subsided, she told the ghastly story, shedding tears like rain. No longer the stern avenger now, no longer the glorious, unattainable lady of Rocca Forte, she was only a child who had lost her father.

The faces of the Rocca Forte men were grim and terrible as they heard the tale of Arnulfo's murder, and learned that the wretched ruffians before them were his murderers. Few men, with that guilt upon them, would have cared to meet the gaze of Jaufré and his fellows then. But Odo looked up into their stern eyes with pitiful relief.

"Do what you will with us," he gasped, "hang us, crucify us—only take us away from her!"



At Twenty Fathoms

by
Charles Brown Jr



Author of "The Hurricane," "Phanfo the Terrible," etc.

A GIRL was crying on the sugar-white beach at Kora Pai. She may have been seventeen, and possibly a year or two younger.

With her brown head in her arms, she lay half-way down the long stretch of sand, crying, crying. Her slender body was clothed in a cinnamon-brown dress which had not been made for her, and her feet were laced in small black shoes that were sun-peeled and hardened.

The clothing and shoes made her cry. The shoes cramped and blistered her feet, and the clothing gripped and clung to her, so that her breath came with pain and difficulty. She wanted to tear the shoes and clothing from her and throw them into the waves creaming and melting on the lip of the beach; but she feared to act against the dictates of the strange white missionary woman who had dressed her in that fashion.

For an hour the girl cried intermittently. Then, when the cruel noonday sun was almost above her, she rose with great effort and began limping toward the red cord of a path tangling from the brush-grown cliffs a half a mile away.

As she was passing a clump of long still spear-grass, she staggered and fell in a crumpled heap, crying, her head into her arms. Presently she crawled to her feet and limped on once more.

Wauna, the little Samoan pearl-diver, had been limping, staggering and falling for many days, Mrs. Kingsley, the traveling missionary of Apia, having insisted that if Wauna wanted to be a Christian it was very

necessary that she should "cover her pagan nudity." Mrs. Kingsley was the first woman missionary to visit Kora Pai, and her clothes had instantly fascinated Wauna.

There was nothing on the island as beautiful as those cinnamon-brown garments, thought Wauna. But the other women, fat and unable to wear the clothes, laughed at them, saying that a true South Sea island woman would not put them on.

The morning after arriving Mrs. Kingsley, who felt that Wauna was not an ordinary island woman, dressed her completely. Wauna's light-brown face sparkled.

But the minute she walked down the white coral gravel of the village street she was in pain and trouble. The villagers let out shouts of wild laughter. The men, women and children lay face down in the grass in front of their houses and kicked hilariously. They rolled on their backs and cackled in a chorus that was heard on the beach. They sat up and screeched at short intervals:

"Wauna all same wanta be like one fella misshinary Mary! Wauna all same wanta be like one fella misshinary Mary!"

Then they lay down and crowded.

The shoes refused to grip the ground and cramped Wauna's toes into small knots, biting away the skin. She tried to unlace the shoes, but the moment she leaned over she sprawled through the tinkling gravel. There was an undergarment, a strange white thing which hooked in front, that clutched her stomach and sides until they were deep and sore with wrinkles. By

noon she was bathing in the forest pool where the coconut-trees cast such wonderful shadows on the water.

That evening she pleaded with Mrs. Kingsley to take the clothes back. When the missionary insisted "No," Wauna asked how she was going to dive for pearls with a dress on. Mrs. Kingsley admonished that Wauna should not dive, as diving was for men. Wauna then advanced her strongest argument. Where was she going to find a man to do her diving? Few men came to the island, and there was not a man at Kora Pai who could dive as deeply as she and remain down as long.

Wauna was half through the argument when the villagers interfered. They agreed she should wear the clothes. Of course, they did not say they wanted amusement and that Wauna was the laughed-at-one of the village.

In the end she had run away to the green twilight of the forest and hidden for two days. Then she submitted to Mrs. Kingsley, who began her homeward flight four mornings later, satisfied that the natives, especially Wauna, had been given a good Christian start.

By the time Wauna finished toiling up the red cord of a path to the cliff tops, the pitiless noonday sun had passed, searing the palm-trees. She pushed into the low shrubbery, covering the cliffs until they looked like yellow-green rugs hung out to dry, and pulled off the shoes and stockings.

As the body-pain tightened its grip, she became defiant. She tore the cinnamon-brown dress from her, pulling hastily on the buttons until they flew in all directions like tiny white pebbles. In removing the underclothing she almost tore them to strips. Then she rolled the remnants of Mrs. Kingsley's "Christianity" about the shoes and leaned over the cliff with the brown bundle.

Suddenly she drew back, contemplating the clothes. In spite of the pain, the trouble, the unhappiness they had given, they were pretty, and soft to the touch.

As she stood with the bundle in the bend of her arm, her soft brown hair cascading below her waist and her supple brown body pulsating with ecstasy as it drank in the sunshine and the air, the sea began to shout:

"Why don't you throw it? Why don't you throw it? Why don't you throw it?"

And then it started again—

"Why don't you ——"

Wauna did not tell the sea why she didn't throw it, but hurried to a near-by cave and deposited the bundle. She returned, lithe as the white sea-hawks planing and drifting in the blue-hot sky above her, and stood with outstretched arms, listening to the humming of the trade-wind surf on the coral reef away out from shore.

Wauna was certain that the blue and white surf was calling. She was different from other island women, it seemed to say.

Though none of the islanders had tried to woo her, she knew that she could not accept any of them.

There had been days when she sat on the cliff tops, feeling that she did not belong to Kora Pai, but to a world entirely different from anything she had ever dreamed of. Her home was no particular house in the village, and she was made to do the menial work in almost all the houses, while the other girls went canoeing and singing.

When a child she had become adept at swimming and diving. And now whenever a pearling ship came to the island the natives would send Wauna out into the lagoon to dive for pearls in exchange for the pearlers' trade goods.

She remembered having gone one morning to Volpo, the sorcerer, and asking him why the sea was always calling her. He did not reply, but grinned until his yellow points of teeth and betel-black specks of eyes frightened her from the house of sorcery.

And again the sea was calling, low-voiced and impatient.

Wauna sat in the yellow-green foliage and heard the sea call on into the windy sundown.



SUDDENLY there came a faint-off shout, and she saw down on the beach a fat woman running cliffward. Wauna recognized the woman. She was always sending her boys out in the afternoon to spear the supper-fish, and was always calling at sundown for Wauna to come and cook them. All at once the woman stopped calling Wauna and raised the cry of:

"Say-O! Say-O!"

Wauna shifted her eyes hurriedly and saw far out against the pink and blue of the sky a dark triangular spot. She watched it grow into three long pin-points of masts, and saw the hull of a vessel rise

above the ring of the sea. The boat was carrying toward the island.

Wauna took the path swiftly. By the time she was half down, she saw the men and boys scurrying to the beach like ants running away from a tumbling ant-hill. They were all striving to get ahead of one another, naked, leaping and shouting joyfully. When they came to the water, they jumped into their long canoes and skimmed out to the wide-open mouth of the lagoon to wait for the vessel.

The brief equatorial twilight was fading when the schooner broke through the rusty silver of the lagoon and shortened sail. Three men clambered over the side into a shore-boat and beached close to where Wauna was standing.

She recognized one man as an old sea captain who had put in for water two years before. He had remained several days, rowing about the leeward side of the island, a part of Kora Pai where the natives seldom ventured. The other men, tall and heavy-boned, she had never seen before.

Instantly the happy and excited islanders led the white men through the long leaning stems of coconut-trees to the village, where gifts of fish-hooks, tenpenny nails, key-rings, clay pipes and generous lengths of scarlet cloth were given to the natives.

Wauna did not walk in the procession, but took a different path. For down on the beach the women had told her that the laughed-at-one was not to go back with them. Also that she must help prepare and serve the banquet which would be given that evening in the *marea* or dance-house. As she went to the *marea*, she wished that she could have just one length of the bright red cloth which the women were winding about their fat brown waists.

All that night as Wauna helped serve the fruit, fish and roasted suckling pig in the low-roofed *marea*, she did not once take away her eyes.

While the natives and their three guests repeatedly vowed eternal friendship, touching noses in the manner of South Sea islanders, she could not resist looking full into the kind gray-brown eyes of the young man in immaculate white drill. He sat on a grass mat at the head of the banquet, seemingly unconscious of her.

When she served the man sitting between the schooner captain and Volpo, the sorcerer, she became afraid. He was

watching her with a clucking chuckle in his throat and with a brown-toothed grin which leered across his sandy face to the wide-long scar above his eyes.

Always she glanced back to the tanned youthful face of the young man. And when the throb of the dance-drums began, hushing the far-away boom of the surf, and Wauna took her place in the native dance going on in the center of the *marea*, she stood for a moment looking shyly down at him and biting her pearl-shell necklace.

But Stanley Downie did not return measure for measure. As Wauna advanced and retreated before him, dancing, just like a wild flower nodding in the light hill-wind, and sang in her low plaintive voice the *himine* of the pearly fleets, he turned to Captain Beary, the schooner captain. He urged the captain to hasten his eating and go back to *The Wandering Anchor*.

Captain Beary, a man of fifty with fast-graying hair above the temples and with heavy down-curving lines on either side of his tobacco-stained mouth, dropped his puffed lids a notch over his gray eyes and told Downie to save his contempt and remarks until they were aboard the schooner.

Downie's remarks throughout the banquet had been provoked by first impressions. At the beginning he had observed Wauna lug a deep-bottomed basket of drinking-coconuts into the *marea*. As she set it on the floor, he asked Mr. Eden, the mate of *The Wandering Anchor*, who was chuckling at Wauna, what good was strength in a woman, especially a savage woman.

In the midst of the banquet Wauna gave Downie a roasted yam. He asked Captain Beary if he had ever known people to take on flesh and strength by perennially picnicking on fruits, berries and nuts. And when Wauna was preparing for the dance, Downie inquired if there were any women's clothes among the trade stuff of *The Wandering Anchor*.

On the whole, the island women did not resemble the descriptions which Captain Beary and Eden, particularly Eden, had given him on the down-trip. Also they were, in his mind, inferior to the women up home.



UP HOME was San Francisco, where Downie had been cashier of the Hamlyn Iron Works. Until the previous five months things had come easily to him as they do to a young man who

holds a membership in two clubs, is known to his friends by his first name, and keeps company with a major's daughter.

Marjorie Conklin, the major's daughter, was all blonde and powder-coated, was the darling of a military reservation, and was not always at home when Downie called. When he asked her one night if she could give him any hope, she replied that she could not as she had just secretly engaged herself to her father's first lieutenant.

Two weeks later Downie was in Honolulu with a leave of absence. There he met Captain Beary, proprietor of The Broken Compass, a rooming-house for seamen. Captain Beary had conclusive proof of a fortune in pearls and pearl-shell lying in a lagoon on the back of beyond in the South Pacific. The place was called Kora Pai, and he had once put into it for water. Downie, anxious to get to the back of beyond with his leave of absence, was easily prevailed upon to finance an expedition.

When Captain Beary instructed him to save his contempt, Downie glanced at Eden, leaving the captain with his mouth and chin splashing in a yellow piece of bread-fruit. Downie saw that Eden was watching Wauna closely.

It was the scar on Eden's forehead which had attracted Downie.

Unknown to Downie or Captain Beary, the scar belonged to the time Eden recruited boys for plantation labor from the wild island of Malaita in the Solomons. On a down-trip he had shot a "return" or going-home boy, a chief's son, in the small of the back. The chief put up a standing jack-pot of one hundred pigs for the man or boy who could deliver, fresh or sun-dried, Eden's head. And on Eden's last up-trip a cabin boy had almost delivered.

The drums in the *marea* were falling to a low throb when Downie looked back to the dance. Wauna was not dancing, but standing a short way off, her eyes sparkling with glad excitement and looking down at him as if waiting for his applause.

Downie did not applaud.

Wauna shifted her eyes. The next instant she saw Eden leering swiftly toward her. Before she could run she was in his arms, screaming and beating her hands against his face. She broke his hold and ran to Downie. She dropped beside him, crying and shaking in every limb.

"Com' on, yer little she-shark," panted

Eden, as a hush swept over the *marea*, and the men and women stood scattered against the walls, expectant and waiting. "T'at ain't no way ter treat a ferst mate. Ain't yer got one kiss fer Eden?"

Wauna saw him swaying to where she crouched, then Downie's big white body leaping to meet Eden. The next moment she heard a blow, rock-hard and resonant, then the heavy impact of something striking the floor. When she looked, Eden was sprawling on his face and hands.

"Eden, I signed you on as mate."

Downie was standing above him, his fists clenched and anger-hot to the knuckles.

"And while you're on the articles you're going to play straight. I brought you down here to work *The Anchor*, and not to run after savages. This is the first time I've struck you, and I've been holding back a long time."

Eden made no response nor did he attempt to get up. He lay on his back with his sandy head rolled to one side and a forest of red hair growing out of his torn shirt. The scar above his closed eyes alternated from red to white.

Presently he staggered silently to his feet and drew his shirt sleeve across his blackened eyelids. He looked neither at Downie nor Captain Beary, but fumbled at his belt for something that did not hang there. Then he lurched out into the moonlight shining on the white coral gravel.

As the sound of Eden's irregular steps was lost at the end of the street, Wauna saw Downie turn to Captain Beary and signal to go back to *The Wandering Anchor*. She slowly came forward, her frightened eyes showing a wide circle of white about the pupil. She loosened her necklace.

"All same for white man who no 'fraid," she said, holding out the pearl-shell.

Downie took the necklace.

"Captain," he asked, "is this pearl-shell?"

"God, yes!" responded Captain Beary, his breathing almost stopped and his coarse stubby fingers caressing the layers of milk-white smoothness. "Pearl-shell has kept me and my woman working like flunkies in The Compass. All the time afraid to tell about what I seen, on the leeward side of the lagoon. Always believing we'd pull money enough together to work it. That time I put in for water I couldn't touch the shell. I made — sure that the crew didn't hear of what I seen. Some of the

shell holds pearls. The leeward side's deep with——"

"What, is shell as plentiful as all that?" interrupted Downie.

He turned and gave the gift back to Wauna. It was something that had never happened at Kora Pai before. Then, with all his contempt for the island women welling up in him, he passed out of the *marea*. Captain Beary followed.

And when they had gone, when their voices had murmured to nothing among the hillward whispering coconut-trees, Wauna stood with her wet-glazed eyes on the necklace. Suddenly she felt the *marea* rocking with the laughter of the villagers.

II



DOWNIE was anxious the following day to begin work immediately—to try and forget a girl who was all blonde and powder-coated and engaged to her father's lieutenant. Away on the back of beyond in the burning equatorial lands he stood in the companion of *The Wandering Anchor*, looking out to where the spray was sparkling like diamond-dust at midnight.

He was standing alone. The Kanaka crew, done with washing down the decks, had gone ashore; and down in the cabin Eden was bathing his swollen eyes and taking quinine to fight off island fever. The fierce noonday sun had just crawled across the slanting coconut-trees, and the natives were returning home from the shade of the forest. A paddle-blade cutting noisily into the breast of the lagoon caused Downie to turn shoreward.

He saw Captain Beary sitting in an outrigger canoe which foamed toward *The Wandering Anchor*. In the stern a native diver, with his brown back glistening in the sun and arching itself from time to time, swept the water with the flat of a long paddle; while on the outrigger, supplying the weight to keep it down and holding the mainsheet with her foot, sat Wauna.

When Captain Beary climbed aboard *The Wandering Anchor*, pulling up a bulging bag of coconuts, he informed Downie that they were going around to the leeward side of the lagoon to look for the oyster-beds.

"But why bring a woman, Captain Beary?" inquired Downie. "You had better send her ashore."

"No. I had better not," responded Captain Beary as they dropped into the putty-colored shore-boat. "The whole village said that she was to go along. And along she goes."

In shoving off, neither Downie nor Captain Beary made any further remarks; but Eden, standing with his bare head and shoulders out of the companion-entrance, grimaced and laughed. Once he stopped laughing and stooped for a holystone and a long sheath knife.

He squatted himself on the companion-steps, and wedged the stone between his knees. His shaggy head dropped until a boy from the far-away shores of wild Malaita could have delivered with one tomahawk slash. His arm began to jerk spasmodically as he drew the knife across the stone. During the next quarter of an hour he watched the blade throw away its worn-dull edge for one of sharpened purpose.

"Eden, yer ain't a —— Kanaka," he muttered in a quinine breath, as he rose and two-legged to the bag of drinking-coconuts. "W'en they kic' yer lik' they kic'ed yer las' night because of t'at —— piece of brown meat, yer're goin' ter kic' bac'. An' —— soon —— the stinkin' nig-gars!"

He dragged the bag of coconuts to the mouth of the companion and selected a large nut. With the point of the knife he removed the center tooth or stopper of the shell. After thoroughly examining the mouth of the coconut, he put back the tooth, driving it in with the ball of his thumb; and selected three other nuts. He did not disturb their stoppers, but compared them carefully with the first nut.

When he lifted his face, grinning and baring his teeth just like a dog before biting, he saw that Captain Beary and Downie had pulled around to the leeward side of the lagoon.

At Captain Beary's secret pearling grounds Downie and Wauna saw, as the shore-boat rose to the heave of the long gentle swell of the lagoon, the oyster-beds lying far below them. The oysters lay asleep with their mouths open, while prismatic fish, poisoning themselves with palpitating gills and gauzy fins, fanned the water.

As Downie peered into the water, Wauna gave him many points on pearling. One was always sure of finding from one to a half-a-dozen small pearls, she said. In

collecting oysters one should always look for those which had an aged appearance, were deformed in shape, and covered with a growth of coral. The oldest shells were to be found under the dark overhanging ledges of coral.

While Wauna had been talking to Downie, the native diver had knotted his long black hair tightly about his forehead and slipped into the water where he floated, inhaling wonderfully long breaths. Downie watched him.

The native inflated his lungs and plunged to the oyster-beds twenty fathoms below. Seizing one of the shells, he tugged and wrenched until it broke away from the coral. Then he shot to the surface and dropped the oyster into the shore-boat.

He hung there, gasping for breath. His mouth was pale and his black eyes were suffused with blood. His ears and nostrils were bleeding also. The veins in his forehead looked as though they would burst at any moment.

"No more go," he cried to Downie. "All water him one fella too deep."

Downie and Captain Beary looked down at the oyster-beds. In vain they tried to persuade the native to dive again.

Suddenly Downie saw Wauna crawl off the outrigger into the canoe and pick up a wide-meshed fiber bag.

"Wauna no 'fraid go," she said, letting herself into the water. Her eyes looked into Downie's. "Water him deep, but Wauna no 'fraid—jus' like you no 'fraid when mate take Wauna in *marea*."

"No, you must not," Downie commanded curtly. "You could not live at such a depth."

But before he could prevent her she had plunged to the oyster-beds. He took nearly forty breaths before she returned to the surface and emptied the oysters into the boat.

He sat amazed, holding to the bulwarks of the boat and staring into the unmoved face of Captain Beary. He tried to speak, but the words would not form.

"You can't tell what these island women will do," said Captain Beary quietly.

Wauna was bleeding but little at the nostrils. She dropped down again, returning at the end of two minutes.

When she prepared for a third descent, Downie and Captain Beary lifted her into their boat.

While she was seating herself in the stern, Downie's big body gave a start. For the first time he noticed Wauna's hair and eyes. Her eyes were as blue as the blueness of the far-away horizon, and her hair and skin were light brown.

All day Downie had been thinking of a blonde girl who had ridiculed him one evening when he read aloud poetry of brown and black-eyed women who lived in the fields, on the hilltops, and in the sea. That Wauna should be one of those poem-women and possess blue eyes and light brown hair was something that he could not understand.

"Captain Beary," he said, drawing the captain's attention, "I didn't know that South Sea islanders ever had blue eyes and——"

"It's the first time I ever seen one running around without black hair and eyes," interrupted Captain Beary, pulling the bend in the cliffs. "But you'd better not let her color scheme worry you. For there's work coming. Lifting that shell isn't going to be easy."

And Captain Beary spoke from experience. For Downie learned in the days which followed that lifting pearl-shell was the hardest kind of labor. He also learned that pearly quickly breaks an inexperienced diver in spite of his being locked in a suit of rubber and metal.



AFTER *The Wandering Anchor* dropped anchor over the pearly grounds and her deck had been cleared for the rotting of oysters, Captain Beary found that he could not induce the islanders to dive into the rich beds. Though they coveted his tins of salmon, sticks of sealing wax, spotted beans, glass beads and strips of colored cloth, they feared the effects which would result from working at such a depth. Even the Kanaka divers, squatting on their hams and smoking clay pipes in the shadows of *The Wandering Anchor's* wheel-house, refused to go down.

Wauna pleaded in vain with Captain Beary and Downie to let her work.

Downie and Captain Beary had prepared for emergencies by purchasing a diving-suit at Honolulu. The suit was too small for Captain Beary, and Eden would not wear it because he "had not signed articles as a diver." There was nothing for Downie to do but put on the suit himself.

On the first diving day he was hoisted to the surface again and again. When the glass-face helmet was unscrewed, he complained of pain in his lungs and a drumming sensation in his ears. At no time could he work over fifteen minutes at the oyster-beds.

He found it difficult to tread along the shell-strewn floor of the lagoon. Also it was hard for him to walk among the coral patches.

The coral assumed every shade of color. Some were a delicate pink or blue. Others were a brilliant mauve, and still others a pale primrose. They were simply gelatinous slime which insisted on tangling about the air-tube. This worried him.

One other lagoon thing gave Downie worry. It was not the blood-shark with its scythe-like tail and sand-paper hide; for Wauna had assured Downie that sharks seldom came into the lagoon. The other worrying thing was the tridacna or giant sea-clam.

The tridacna was always to be found in the lagoon as well as in the sea, Wauna had explained to Downie. It usually lay hidden in the sand or in the coral patches with its quarter-ton shell jaws wide open, waiting to nip off the limb of anything that came along—just like Downie would bite through a piece of celery.

There was no telling when he might step or stumble into the mouth of a tridacna.

Among the islanders who came each day to watch the work was one who remained until Downie had swung to the surface for the last time. Always Wauna leaned far over her outrigger canoe, gazing down into the lagoon as shoals of great red and blue fish drifted lazily above Downie.

Four weeks crawled by at Kora Pai. They were busy weeks, with Downie either diving or searching the soft parts of the decomposed oysters for pearls, while the Kanaka boys stacked away the shell.

Each day when the noon sun smote the lagoon until it dazzled like glass, Wauna went below into the sloping cabin of *The Wandering Anchor*. After Captain Beary had exhausted his ten records on the little tin phonograph and the red glow in his pipe had dulled to gray-brown, he would open the drawer of the ship's writing-table and bring out the small shell-covered box in which were kept the pearls.

By the end of the fourth week one hun-

dred and thirty-five pearls had been secured. Six of them were as large as ordinary marbles, perfectly round, and luminous white. They were perfect in every respect and, according to Captain Beary, would fetch twenty-five thousand dollars apiece at Tahiti, the central market for export to London and Paris.

Of the hundred and twenty-nine remaining pearls about one-quarter of them were seedlings, while the others varied in sizes, formations and colors. This lot would sell for about fifty thousand dollars, Captain Beary estimated. And the pearl-shell would bring a large sum.

Downie would be rich enough to buy an interest in the Hamlyn Iron Works. There were any number of things that he would be able to do with his money.

The sale of the pearls would mean more to Captain Beary. He was at last to realize his sea-dream—the dream which had been his on all the oceans of the world.

No more would he and Mrs. Beary toil like flunkies in *The Broken Compass*. And never would he again tramp wind-jammers across the fevered wastes of the South Pacific.

He and Mrs. Beary were going to live on a sugar plantation on the island of Hilo. They would have a large house, a house which would not be thrown together with tin, but made of light and cooling woods, with a six-fathom wide veranda running around it. The house and the plantation would drive from their remembrance all the hurts and wrongs which had come to them in ship cabins and *The Broken Compass*.

At last they were fetching into port. There was to be no more going out, no more storms and buffeting seas to fight through, nothing but long, long days on the island of Hilo.

On those still burning noondays, as they stood in the light of the companion, passing the pearls from one to the other, Downie, Captain Beary and Wauna saw nothing but the gems. They never observed the long spear of shadow which slowly moved across the companion as Eden gazed covetously down into the cabin.

During those four weeks there were days when Wauna and Downie lingered on the beach at yellow sunset, picking up derelict shells and listening to the sea talking to the foam-stained sand. Those were day-ends

when Downie forgot everything lying beyond the rim of the South Pacific: the Hamlyn Iron Works, newspapers to be scanned in morning trains, business appointments and problems to be met, society with its monotony, and—Marjorie Conklin.

He was growing to think of her less often, to shift her farther and farther away into the dim background of remembrance as some men can do in far-out places after their lives have almost been spoiled by a woman. He was realizing, too, that he had been nothing but a marionette to her, and that it was her capriciousness which had controlled the strings.

Sometimes he wondered why he had loved Marjorie Conklin. Her voice, her features, and her ways were running from him like wine from a broken cask. Probably he had wanted her because his subconscious mind had known from the beginning that she was unattainable to him, he said to himself. And he let it go at that, content to forget near the end of the sailing-lanes on the back of beyond.

Wauna was filling his mind more and more each day. Though he had at first scoffed at her and her mode of living, he found himself at times looking for her as disappointed or lonely men seek the companionship of a child. The blue of her eyes and the light brown of her hair and skin were things that he never ceased puzzling over. Since the afternoon when she dived into the lagoon she had shown him many things about swimming and climbing. Though she seemed a child, there were bird-swift moments when the woman in her leaped to the surface, crying—

"I am the woman you failed to find in Marjorie Conklin."

It was a cry that always went unheard.

There were lazy days when Downie did not work, but climbed through the jungle to the brown shoulders of the hills. He and Wauna sat upon a moss-cushioned boulder, looking out to the horizon where the clouds were blowing like white scraps of paper.

Sitting into the five o'clock sun-drop, he told Wauna of the Northeast. He talked about trains, crowds and lighted cities, describing them until her eyes and lips were as full of wonder and laughter as they were of sunset and sea-wind. Always her happiness moved him to the bone.

For Wauna they were escape-days from

the menial work in the houses of the villagers. Often she was away from the village all day, returning only when night was darkening down. Though the arrogant island women were angry with envy that Downie should have taken to Wauna, Volpo the sorcerer ordered them to let her alone.

Wauna had never known a pearler as kind and generous as Downie. He had given her fathoms of trade calico, which the island women dared not take away, and had strung her light moss-brown neck with pink and blue beads. Whereas the other pearlers, with the exception of Captain Beary, had frightened her, Downie had instilled in her a desire to be near him. She was dreading the time when *The Wandering Anchor* would climb out to the far-away horizon for good.

Though she had not been molested by Eden since the night in the *mareca*, he still frightened her. While returning to the village one evening, she silently came upon him in the grove of coconut-trees. He was removing and putting back the stoppers of the largest nuts, and was wrinkling his sandy face with laughter. Wauna crept away. As she went, one of her beaded neck-strings, the all blue one, fell to the ground. In her hurry and fright she did not hear the necklace fall.

One windy morning Downie and Wauna climbed to the cliff tops. Downie took a magazine with them. As they sat near the yellow-green brush, with the sea-hawks circling and crying in the blue above them, he showed her the illustrations in the book. They caused Wauna to clap her slender hands and lower her brown mist-hair over the pictures. For they were of women who dressed in soft, pretty clothes like Mrs. Kingsley.

Wauna thought of the cinnamon-brown bundle in the cave. She wanted to show it to Downie. But something in her said: "Nol Wait until you can put them on."

She pondered a long while, then promised the something that she would wait.



ALONG toward dusklight near the end of the fifth week Downie and Wauna were leaning over the port-rail aft of *The Wandering Anchor's* cabin. They were looking out to the edge of the sea where the sun was hurrying through her bathing before the moon should come up and see her. Suddenly they heard a noise

behind them. They turned and saw Captain Beary toiling up the companion-steps.

His hair had turned gray like dead coral, and his face was as lined and cracked as the yellow tarpaulin stretched across the cabin.

Captain Beary looked as though he was hard hit by island fever and was coming up on deck to catch the cool push of the sea-wind. But it was not fever poison which was driving him from below.

In a voice as old as the face he called Downie aside.

"Downie," he said, pausing to get his bearings. "The pearls. I can't find them."

His face turned as pale as the beach running down to the lip of the lagoon.

"I've been looking every place," he went on. "In the ship's drawer. Back of the books. On the shelves. They ain't there. I don't know where they are."

"Are they in the bottom of your berth?" asked Downie, hastening down into the narrow cabin.

He remembered that when the first two large pearls were secured Captain Beary secreted them in his berth.

"You may have put them there."

"No. They were in the ship's drawer when I went to sleep this afternoon."

Downie, calm as the red and blue sheet of lagoon showing through the open port-hole beside the scarred writing-table, opened the drawer. He removed the log, the ship's papers and a handful of small stuff. He carefully looked through the drawer, but did not find the pearls.

The cabin shelves were searched, and the two rows of red-backed books were taken down from the case above the writing table. Next Downie's and Captain Beary's berths were gone through to their wooden bottoms, then Eden's berth was searched. All of the bedding was shaken thoroughly and thrown into the center of the immaculate white floor.

The pearls had completely vanished from the cabin.

"All lost!" said Captain Beary, leaning his aging body wearily against his berth and staring helplessly at the bedding on the floor. "Your twenty thousand that went into *The Anchor*. You can't buy in, on the iron works now. Lagoon almost worked out. But me and the Mrs. will make it up for you some time. We'll hang on to

The Compass. And I'll get a regular boat again. We'll make it up——"

"You can't make it up. You can't make it up," a cockroach in the bedding chirred. "You're old. You're old." And then it began chirring all over again.

"I'm sure they're in the cabin," said Downie confidently, going through the drawer again. "There is no one who would take them from us."

As Downie was putting back the ship's papers, Eden entered from the storeroom, barefooted and shirtless. He stopped short and rolled his eyes down over his puffed cheeks to the litter of bedding, books and paper. Then he lifted them to the men.

"Eden," said Downie before the mate could speak, "Captain Beary and I are looking for the pearls. They were in the ship's drawer at noon, but we can not find them now. Probably——"

"An' yer 'ave looked about 'ere?" interrupted Eden, his eyes roving slowly over the cabin. "Then eve'y — t'ing's goin' ter be looked at agin."

He paused to gorge his cheek with trade-tobacco, then went on:

"Them — niggars in ther for'castle might 'ave been in 'ere. I 'aven't worked niggars from Malaita ter Honolulu wit'out gettin' ter know them. It's — luc'y fer us t'at they ain't pic'ed ther *Anchor* ter pieces by now. I t'inkt' at we 'ad better begin in ther for'castle."

When Downie and Captain Beary followed Eden into the sleeping-quarters of the crew, darkness was fast glooming down in the place and the stagnant heat was stabbing violently. A hurricane lantern was lighted and the room was hand-dragged from end to end. The bags and boxes of the Kanaka boys were opened and emptied, and the little bedding that was in the place was also searched. But one fact came out: the pearls were not in the fore-castle.

Next, at Eden's suggestion, the store-room was gone over. The result was not a whit more encouraging.

"They ain't in them — niggars' quarters," said Eden, entering the cabin. "An' they ain't in ther stor'room or ther cabin."

He hesitated for a moment, spitting brown spray through the port-hole. Then he asked pointblank—

"Are they on us?"

Downie and Captain Beary glanced

quickly at each other, then returned their eyes to Eden.

"I ain't sayin' t'at we'd lift stones," Eden explained himself, shifting over to the companion entrance and folding his greasy arms in the wet forest of red hair, "but we might save us a lot of — trouble if we enquired. I was called a lifter once, and ther stuff was found on another man."

Like a dog taking hold of a bone Eden fastened his eyes on Downie.

"Yes, it is well that we make a thorough search," responded Downie, unbuttoning his shirt.

The clothing of the three men were looked through but no pearl was found.

The cockroach in the bedding was chirring again, screeching at Captain Beary:

"You can't live on the island of Hilo. You can't live on the island of Hilo."

 SUDDENLY Downie crossed the slope of the cabin and stopped at the phonograph stand. On the floor was a box of spilled needles. Near them lay a string of blue beads.

"An islander has been in here. Since noon, too," said Captain Beary, stumbling over to Downie and kneeling beside the stand. "And knocked over them needles. And forgot them beads."

Captain Beary's hand groped to the back of the stand. When he rose with a start, a moment later, the pearl-box was clutched in the palm. The lid was open, showing an empty box.

"No. I didn't put the box there for safety," Captain Beary said to Downie and Eden. "Some one was here. And played the phonograph. And left their beads. That one has them pearls."

Downie's fingers closed on the blue beads until they cut into the softness of his palm. Two weeks before his fingers had wound the string about Wauna's neck.

"I seen her 'ere," said Eden, pointing to Wauna, who was leaning over the port-rail as if waiting for Downie to come up before she went back to shore. "She was pic'in' up ther needles. She run out when I com' in."

Neither Downie nor Captain Beary spoke as they crossed to the companion-stairs. The room trembled with their heavy breathing.

They could not believe that Wauna would steal their pearls after all the kind-

ness they had shown her. And yet Captain Beary had heard strange stories of island women, and had even known them to do stranger things.

"Call her," was all that he said when he at last spoke to Downie.

When Wauna came down into the cabin, Downie did the questioning.

"Wauna," he asked, his voice and face grave, "were you in here this afternoon?"

"Yes," she responded, raising her eyes.

"Did you play the phonograph?"

"Yes."

"And are these your beads?"

Wauna reached over and took the string. Instantly she recognized it as the one she lost in the grove the afternoon she came upon Eden removing and putting back the stoppers of coconuts.

"Yes, they belong to Wauna."

Eden, standing on the companion-stairs, chuckled away down in his throat. The chuckling sounded just like the lagoon running its tongue along the hull of *The Wandering Anchor*.

"That is all. You may go back to shore," said Downie almost in a whisper. "Captain Beary and I will send for you later."

For a moment Wauna stood looking first at Downie and then to Captain Beary as if asking what she had done. Downie turned and walked over to the storeroom entrance.

"No. Captain Beary isn't going to send for her later."

Captain Beary moved suddenly from the companion stairs, stopping beside Wauna.

"She's here now, and that is better than sending for her later."

He faced Wauna inquiringly.

"Did you look at the pearls after playing the phonograph and spilling them needles? You knew they were in the drawer."

Wauna raised her eyes puzzlingly. She saw Captain Beary fumbling with the empty pearl-box. Also, she saw his eyes. They were as gray and hard as the layer of shell covering the box.

Immediately she understood the whole situation—and all that Captain Beary and Downie believed. She tried to tell him how mistaken they were, but she could find no words that would help her.

"What did you do with the pearls after taking them out of the ship's drawer, and hiding the box behind the phonograph?"

"Wauna no took pearl," she said, looking full into Captain Beary's hard gray eyes.

She stepped toward the phonograph.

"Wauna no see pearl today. Nobody here to show Wauna pearl. An' Wauna no drop needles or beads."

Captain Beary crossed quickly to her and caught her forearm, roughly jerking her toward him.

"What she just said helps to prove she has them," he cried over his shoulder at Downie.

His eyes dropped to Wauna and he spoke thickly.

"You lost your necklace here. But you tell us that you didn't. You took the pearls. Just as sure as you dropped the beads. Where are they planted. Back of the village or in the coco grove? You're going ashore with me. To dig them up."

His hand tightened on her arm until she wanted to cry with pain. The next moment he called for a deck boy to prepare the shore-boat.

Downie intercepted Captain Beary at the companion door, loosening Wauna's arm.

"Captain, we can not say that she took the pearls until we have something stronger than a necklace to build our accusation on."

"She's handled the pearls every day. And was here at noon. It was after she had gone, that I couldn't find them. The Kanakas would hardly chance taking them. She would. That's strong enough to build accusation on. Isn't it?"

"Yer may be right, Capt'in, an' yer may not be," Eden spoke from the companion-stairs, "but——"

"Eden," Downie interrupted, "what Captain Beary has said proves nothing at all."

He addressed Captain Beary.

"If she has them, they'll be returned by morning, I am positive. If we do not find them, I will see that you do not lose the money you have put into this expedition."

He turned to Wauna and said—

"You may go ashore."

Wauna climbed the companion-stairs, too stunned to cry. As she passed Eden, she saw him looking at her—just like a hungry dog looking at food.

 THREE hours after Wauna had gone Downie restlessly walked the shadowy deck of *The Wandering Anchor*. The night was one of those when all the island was at unrest. The homeless wind, blowing in from the lonely sea, flapped and creaked weirdly in the sails as *The*

Wandering Anchor loomed strange in the orange moonlight; the giant banana-trees shook their long arms angrily as they tried to catch the stars which glinted in and out of them; the gray robber-crabs, feeding ravenously on the papaw fruit strewn along the beach path, clattered across the rocks again and again; and far away in the dim gray jungle the kapapos called, called. Sleep and rest were as far off as San Francisco.

Downie was at unrest because of Wauna. He could not bring himself to believe that she had taken the pearls.

Why would she steal them?

"She could get pearls by diving," he reasoned.

There were other things about Wauna which put him at unrest—especially since the pearls were gone. Why were her hair and eyes not black like those of the other island women? And why did she climb so often to the cliff tops and sit into the blue-gray twilight, listening to the cool wind flowing down from the north.

At last he realized that she was stronger than any woman he had ever known, even stronger than most men. He also realized that during the five weeks she had grown to be more than a child to him.

"Downie, you love her!" the sea-wind shouted, ripping and tearing among the sails as it looked for a place to sit down and rest. "You love her! You love her!"

"No! No!" he cried. "I—I do not—love her."

He stopped short in an orange-black shadow pool.

"She is only an island woman," he argued. "An island woman with more strength, prettiness and intelligence than the other women."

And she was helping him to forget the woman who had almost spoiled his life.

"No, it is not love," he was positive. "It is only—companionship."

Then he told himself something, fully realizing its truth.

"I couldn't marry her. She is a Samoan. And I'm white. No, there could be no marriage. It might be different if I had gone native."

He turned to go aft and saw Eden, like a long deck-shadow, leaning against the mizzenmast, whistling softly through his teeth and whittling with a long knife which gleamed ominously in the moonlight. Eden

shifted his back and slunk across to the starboard rail as silently as an island dog.

Suddenly there sounded the lonely dipping of a paddle, then the purring and brushing of a canoe against the hull of *The Wandering Anchor*. The next minute a native came climbing over the port-rail, smelling of coconut-oil, pungent and warm.

The native spoke to Downie.

"Volpo him all same want one fella Do'nee," he said. "Him all same say him maybe 'now one fella Mary (woman) who make one fella pearl run-along an' hide low down. Him tell one fella Do'nee one fella Mary who make one fella pearl run-along an' hide low down."

Without responding to the native, Downie went below into the cabin and returned with several sticks of tobacco and tins of salmon for Volpo the sorcerer. He slid off to shore with the native and headed straight for the sorcerer's house. At the head of the village street he passed Captain Beary, who was telling and retelling to a group of cackling natives how Wauna had stolen the pearls.

Downie returned to *The Wandering Anchor* two hours later, carrying a package as large and round as the ship's wheel. It was wrapped in an old piece of canvas.

Downie was strangely agitated. He did not turn into his berth immediately, but sat at the writing-table, going over the details of the amazing story which Volpo had told him. At times he jumped up and nervously paced the slope of the narrow cabin. Always he came back to the writing-table and stood in the flickering yellow light of the hurricane lantern, studying the torn and sea-stained canvas.

Gray light was streaking the lagoon when he stretched himself flat on his berth and closed his eyes.

Along toward noon Captain Beary, Downie and Eden gathered in the cabin and made new plans. Though the pearls had not been recovered, it was agreed that the diving should go on just the same as the shell might bring enough to pay the expenses of the expedition. Again, there was the possibility of finding new pearls; but this would continue to grow more and more uncertain, as the lagoon was almost worked out.

Downie resumed diving immediately after the discussion.

By afternoon Captain Beary clung in the

shadow of *The Wandering Anchor's* cabin, mopping his gray-in-a-day face with a handkerchief and pumping sultry air into a tube which stretched across the deck into the water. Eden was man-driving and "—niggaring" the Kanaka boys harder than he had driven the boys of Malaita.

Frequently he chased a boy across the deck, hurling his knife at him until it flashed like a long steel arrow. When he went on watch at the pump, Captain Beary climbed down into the cabin to begin all over again his search for the pearls.

The heat was terrible. There was not a ripple on the lagoon as it lay like a huge lake of burning glass. Farther away than it had ever seemed the island slept behind a blue curtain of haze.

Close to the bow of *The Wandering Anchor* Wauna sat in her canoe, gasping from the heat. In spite of being under suspicion, she had returned to watch. She did not go aboard the boat, but pushed her canoe under the bow—unknown to Downie, Captain Beary or Eden.

As she leaned over her canoe, she saw, far down among the coral and the sea grass and the sponges, Downie creeping along the bottom of the lagoon.

His lead-soled shoes were never so heavy. And it was with the greatest effort that he moved his arms. The air came forced and stifling. The oyster bag he dragged was almost empty. At times he felt numb and dizzy. Once he went to kneel and almost reeled backward. Twenty fathoms above lay *The Wandering Anchor* like a big blue fish basking in the sun. Everything about him was hot and still and . . .

Suddenly he threw up his hands and lurched, falling face down in a patch of coral. He staggered to his feet and jerked hard on the signal-line, then fell again.

The next minute the air-tube coiled about him, like a green sea-serpent with death lurking in its fangs. In the tube was a long knife-slash.

Downie struggled in the coral, pulling wildly on the signal-line. But there came no sturdy haul on the life-line to send him swinging to the surface.

He stretched out his hand and felt the heavy line, running across the sand. He tugged at the line, drawing it toward him.

His head throbbed and his legs and arms were growing numb. He was suffocating—dying at twenty fathoms below Kora Pai.

Struggling to retain the air in his lungs, he turned his head and saw something dark falling toward him.

When it struck the sand it sprawled across to him. It cut away the coral and fastened a life-line about his waist.

Then the wavering green light of the lagoon went out.

III

 WHEN twilight darkened to night with the moon looking over the rim of the far-away horizon where the home-bound ships go down, a girl was sitting in the lonely brush of the cliff-tops with her head on her knees, crying, crying.

She did not hear the melancholy call of the sea as it crept upon the dull gray beach, nor the jungle-wind sobbing in the plummy palm-trees like a ghost shut out of home, nor did she hear the heavy toiling of a man down on the path. As her head lifted with a start several minutes later, she saw Eden standing in the climbway, its width filled with his huge body.

Wauna wished she had not come to the cliff-tops, but had pushed into the giant bamboo and trailing vines of the jungle. She knew that Eden never could have found her there.

With her breath almost stilled, she watched him.

Eden, his face a white blur in the dark blackness of the cliff roof, looked slowly about him, panting as though he had run all the way. Presently he came groping toward the brush clumps, his sharp dog-like nostrils once more filled with the scent of frightened game.

When he struck into the brush, Wauna sprang with a low cry and fled to where the path went tangling down to the beach. Eden bolted back through the darkness and reached the path ahead of her.

"So yer t'ink yer can hide from Eden, do yer?" he chuckled, his breath laboring as hard as the wind blowing across the jungle. "An' yer t'ink yer can run som' more?"

Wauna made no answer, but tried to think how she could get away from him. She thought of but one means of escape—to drop herself into the lagoon. And that meant death, nothing less.

"No, Eden ain't lik'ly ter let yer run much longer," he resumed. "It ain't good

for yer. An' Eden never lets his woman run lik' t'at—not after it's takin' him so long ter catch up ter her."

His big hand took hold of Wauna, its fingers curling about the softness of her forearm. A long chuckle went out to the night-hawks screaming and wing-flapping above the lagoon.

Wauna tore Eden's finger-hold apart and shrank toward the overhanging ledge of the cliff. Suddenly she stopped, listening to Eden. He was spinning for her a thin thread of hope.

"Livin' with Eden ain't goin' ter be — fer yer," he began to outline a plan he had no intention of putting through. "Eden's goin' ter be as good ter yer as Downie was."

He approached her, snickering as he thought how good he could be to a woman, especially an island woman. For a minute he stood by the brush clumps, as though confronted by some new problem, and let his eyes go out to the moon climbing above the horizon. He watched the full moon-face look up at the cliffs and call out the shadows.

Immense rock shadows responded with a silent rush; the brush hurled great splotches of black across the stony floor; and, after a minute, the Wauna and Eden shadows began opposing each other, the smaller shadow striving to flit away from the larger. Suddenly there came from the head of the path another shadow, long, thin and wavering.

"W'en yer livin' at Tahiti with Eden," he resumed, shoving his face close to Wauna, "yer goin' ter live in a white man's house, an' not in a — niggars' shed."

Wauna looked at him for a moment, playing for time until the hope thread would stouten sufficiently to hold her until she got back to the village. Then she responded:

"When Wauna livin' with Eden, Wauna no want Eden to stay on sea. Eden get off sea when Eden an' Wauna have house at Tahiti?"

"—, yes," he promised, almost laughing aloud at the thought of his quitting the South Pacific. "Eden'll anchor fas' in port, an' he won't ask fer any more clearin' papers—" and to assure her beyond the shadow of a doubt he blurted—"with all them pearl stones ter bac' us up, —, w'at a white man's life it'll be. No, Eden'll ask fer no more clearin' papers."

"Pearl all gone," said Wauna slowly, staying the shock of her surprise. "Wauna no can go without pearl. How Eden an' Wauna live in house at Tahiti without pearl?"

Eden did not answer her immediately, but shifted to one side as the all-afternoon thoughts again clattered in his skull.

"T'at ——— nigger's dead," his thoughts reiterated. "I seen him fightin' lik' hell at ther bottom of ther lagoon w'en I shoved off fer shor' ter look up help as t'at ——— fool of a Beary thought. An' ter-night I'm goin' ter send Beary ter a place where he won't cry trouble.

"Ther crew'll say t'at ther nigger an' Beary faded out with dysentery, an' it'll be down in ther log, ter. I'll jus' hang down 'ere a while an' play love ter her. Ferst I'll show her ther stones. It won't be so hard ter make up ter her w'en I do t'at. An' I 'ave no one ter be 'fraid of."

Then he said aloud:

"No, ther pearl stones ain't gone. Eden's goin' ter bring them ashore in ther mornin'. An' Eden's goin' ter let yer 'ave them all ter play with."

Breathing as deeply as the lagoon, Wauna stepped into the long shadow that was wavering at the head of the path. She waited.

"Ther stones are on ther *Anchor*," he told her again. "They're in ther stor'room." He checked himself for a moment, then came out with the whole thing. "They're in ther coconuts. Some ——— nigger yanked out ther nut plugs an' dropped ther stones in. Eden's goin' ter bring a nut ashore in ther mornin' an' crack it open to show yer where the stones are."

Wauna's eyes strained in the half-light of the moon, endeavoring to gage the distance between Eden and the path. She saw that it was almost too far for her to run, also that were she to try the hope thread would snap.

"Wauna go with Eden when Eden bring nut," she said, moving away from him. "Now Wauna go to village."

"No, yer ain't goin' yet."

Eden circled her shoulders with his arm and lifted her face to kiss it.

"Yer ferst goin' ter kis' Eden—now."

Wauna struggled out of his arm-hold, beating and scratching his eyes and cheeks. As he hurricaned toward her, she turned and ran to the drop-off place.

Her hope thread had broken.

She was making to throw herself into the lagoon when there came a cry:

"Wauna! Don't!"



THE next instant she saw a long shadow leaping from the path. It crashed upon Eden's back, throwing him face down.

"Eden—you—you," gasped Downie's broken voice. "You thought—you drowned me—did you—you——"

Wauna ran through the yellowing moonlight to where Eden was hammering his iron-hard fist full into Downie's face, driving home blow after blow.

"Yer won't do Eden t'is time," yelled Eden in his hate-voice, crumbling Downie's hold. "There ain't no fight in yer. I'm goin' ter do ter yer w'at yer did ter Eden at ther dance—yer dirty, filthy nigger."

Eden leaped and drove his booted foot into the small of Downie's back. Downie, bone and muscle worn from the long lagoon struggle, staggered to his feet. Immediately he went down under Eden.

For the next few minutes he struggled with Eden across the rock floor, falling and rolling until his head sounded like a coconut cracking.

Eden was trying to shove Downie into the lagoon. It was all Downie could do to hold back. His fight-strength was gone. In a few moments Eden would break him as though he were a piece of worn-out cable.

"Wauna," Downie cried. "Run—run—don't stay—run—run——"

But Wauna did not run. She sprang into the brush, watching to pounce herself upon Eden. As the first island women had fought through the battles of their men so would Wauna fight beside Downie.

Eden was on his feet, crashing about in the brush and endeavoring to shake his adversary off. With his last strength, Downie was clinging to Eden's heavy neck.

Suddenly two vulnerable points, important nerves nearing the surface of the neck, met his thumbs. Downie pressed on the nerves.

Instantly Eden fell staggering in the brush. He flung his arms out, clutching madly at the shrubbery. A branch held him for a moment and then snapped, plunging him over the ledge. He crashed down into the black lagoon of death.

Downie slowly staggered back to the

path. His face was drawn with weariness, and dark rings were under his eyes.

Wauna followed him. For a moment she hesitated in the path, then started to go down.

Downie stepped in front of her and took her hand.

"No, no, let Wauna go," she pleaded, drawing away her hand and trying to pass. "Wauna so unhappy. Wauna no take pearl. Wauna only islan' woman."

Downie did not respond at once, but looked down at her, listening to the lagoon and the night-hawks quarreling noisily over Eden's body.

"That's why I'm here, Wauna," he said at last. "I've come to give you happiness just as you gave me life in the lagoon this afternoon. I know you didn't take the pearls. I heard Eden tell you where he had hidden them. And, Wauna, I've come to tell you something about yourself—something that Volpo and the islanders have never told you."

Wauna stared at him with round eyes. "Wauna, you are not a Samoan woman."

Downie paused before speaking the two sentences which the sea had been trying to tell her all her life.

"You were not born on the island. You are white—an American."

"No, no, don't fool Wauna!" she cried, her eyes filling with childlike doubt and fear. "Wauna only islan' woman."

Again she began to cry.

"You came to the island when you were a little girl," Downie quieted her. "And you have brown hair and blue eyes. The other women have black eyes and hair, and they are dark-skinned, whereas you are only sun-browned. Last night Volpo told me how you came to Kora Pai. I have proof on *The Anchor* of all that he said."

The yellow-round moon was sailing high above them by the time Downie finished the story which the sorcerer related when all the island was at unrest. As Wauna listened breathlessly, there were many details which Downie could not supply. He could only tell her of what had happened at Kora Pai.

When Wauna was four or five years old, she was found one morning on the sandy beach after a night-long hurricane. A life-buoy was fastened about her, and her clothes were torn almost to shreds. Out against the coral reefs two masts of a yacht

projected above the water. While running before the hurricane, the boat had been hurled upon the reefs and knifed from stern to bow. With the exception of Wauna, the yacht party and crew perished.

The natives who found Wauna marveled at her pale skin, believing that she was a spirit. They carried her to Volpo the sorcerer and asked what they should do with her. He instructed them to raise Wauna as one of their own. Also he emphasized that none of the islanders were to marry her, as the supernatural edict said that spirits and Samoans could not marry. As Wauna was the first and only spirit sent to them, this edict had been observed.

After securing a strip of the yacht's sail, Volpo hung away the life-buoy in his house of sorcery, removing it on state occasions only. He allowed Downie to take the buoy and the piece of sail back to *The Wandering Anchor*. With the exception of "*Myrtlenack—U. S. A.*," the buoy's lettering was gone.

"And now, Wauna," said Downie, concluding the story, "you need not remain at Kora Pai any longer. Tomorrow *The Anchor* puts out to sea. Will you come, Wauna? Will you let Downie take you back to the States—to find your people?"

Wauna's eyes filled with tears as they looked up at Downie and then out to where *The Wandering Anchor's* red forecandle light was heaving on the swell of the lagoon.

Suddenly something in her urged:

"Show them now. Show them now. Show them now."

She turned and hurried past the brush clumps. When she returned several minutes later, she was clothed in a long dress. And her feet were laced in shoes. She paused before Downie.

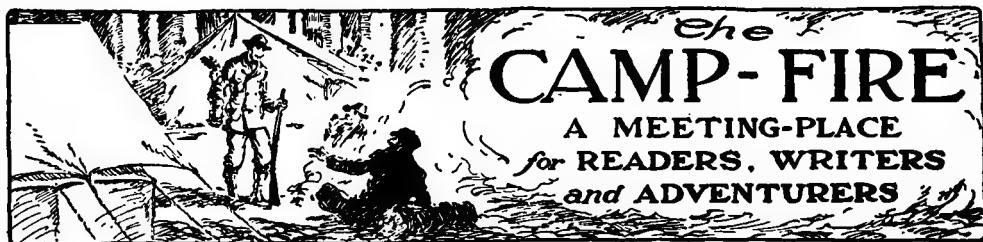
Downie regarded her silently, too surprised to frame his question—

"What does it mean, Wauna?"

"Wauna wear Missis King-slee's Christian dress again," she said, intuitively, "for Wauna no more islan' woman. Wauna all same white woman—all time now."

As Downie's love for Wauna swept completely into its own, he caught both of her hands and laid his lips on them as lightly as a butterfly embracing a wild flower.

"No," he murmured happily, "never will Wauna again be an island woman. She is—Downie's woman."



THERE'S a funny tradition still kicking around that each magazine has its "staff of writers." I don't expect ever to see that idea killed off. But it's a funny one. A very few magazines do have a kind of "staff" of writers in the sense that they depend almost wholly on them for their stories, and all magazines have writers whose tales they use more often than those of others for the simple reason that these writers can furnish the particular kind of story these particular magazines want. But what the tradition means is that magazines are not open to contributions from any one outside their "staffs." Rot.

OF COURSE some magazines fall into the rut of limiting themselves too much to a certain few writers, but generally they do so more or less unconsciously. Anyhow, that's none of my business. But as to *Adventure*, judge for yourself. Our Camp-Fire custom that whenever a new (to *Adventure*) writer joins us with a story he stands up and introduces himself serves as a pretty good index to the steady flow of fresh blood among our writers. I'm glad, however, that along with the new blood we retain some of the old and that we still have stories from some of the men who were giving us stories five, six or seven years ago. They made good with you, with us, and of course we stick to our old and tried friends. And one reason we don't tire of them is because of the constant addition of new writers.

Few of our issues appear, even now that it is twice a month, without at least one new writer to introduce himself to us and sometimes there are two or three. For example, of the eleven issues thus far in 1918 only one has failed to introduce at least one new writer and even this one gave us a story by a man from whom we'd had only one story before. In this issue there are two, and one of them herewith follows our old custom and introduces himself—E. S.

Pladwell. I know he is mistaken in thinking we, his Camp-Fire comrades, might not be personally interested in what he has done and been:

Oakland, Calif.

I have decided that it's the only sporty thing to do to make myself acquainted *via* the Camp-Fire. I hesitated not necessarily from modesty but because one success hardly allowed me to classify myself as an author, because my life has not compared with many of your other writers for pure adventure, and because I feel that no one cares a hoot who I am outside my own warm friends, and they know all about me anyhow.

I AM a newspaper man. I have been so for several years. There are many adventures in this profession, but somehow they all seem second-hand. One is not living his own life, but that of his paper. The things I have got into have been through and for my paper. I have been sent into shooting affairs, stabbing scraps, riots and battles, but to me they are a matter of routine business. It's a good game and I like it.

Before that I was assistant construction inspector on the San Francisco water front, a railroad ticket agent in San Francisco and Portland, and a member of the party which established the elevation of Death Valley for the United States Geological Survey. I was assistant superintendent in a construction job on the Eel River, on a contract for building the Northwestern Pacific railroad into Eureka.

I WILL admit I was a poor engineer and surveyor. I was born with an inborn loathing for mathematics, and got much higher in the business than mere mathematical ability would warrant. I had some adventures in handling men in large gangs and perhaps I prospered at times because I early learned the one essential of the art of bossing: A boss should boss as little as possible. Unless there's shirking, let the men alone. I've seen dozens of good, expert men get in wrong for lack of knowing that one cardinal principle.

I WAS born in Brooklyn and educated everywhere. At fourteen I acquired spinal tuberculosis, which took many years to down. It made me weak in body and, as my bad temper kept well ahead of my physical condition, things became torrid for me. It's cured now.

In wandering about I obtained much local color which will, I hope, aid me in whatever writings I do. I learned to swim, row, box, play baseball and football, draw, dance, write, ride, drive, shoot, dive, and almost everything else, becoming master at none

of these arts but a dabbler in all. I have even tried singing, despite certain frank comments.

MY MOST thrilling experience was a fool Mexican battle, where a lot of men were endeavoring to slaughter each other at Tia Juana. The spectacle was all right, but the smell was awful. Since then, battles have sort of paled in my imagination. It was nothing like a Meissonier picture. It was just bad smell. Since then I have longed to get to Europe, despite the much-advertised smell, but so far the Fates have not decided my way.—E. S. PLADWELL.

And here's a word on his story in this number:

Oakland, Calif.

Almost word for word, the first episode relates what actually happened on the Western division of the Southern Pacific Railroad between Sacramento and Davis some fifteen years ago. The mystery was never solved. Taking patches from other railroad yarns and transplanting the whole thing to the desert, I have managed to evolve a solution with enough climaxes for three or four stories. The first episode I will admit is a bit gruesome, but I think the rest of the yarn takes that all away.—E. S. P.

CONCERNING their story in this issue a word from Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur. The former, after many previous efforts, is now one of the boys in khaki; the latter, after as many efforts, is still barred out by defective eyesight. Here's good luck to them both!

Berkeley, Calif.

Odo and *Sigismundo* are tolerably faithful portraits of twelfth-century Norman adventurers of the baser sort. Brutal, superstitious, eager to plunder the weak, yet even the worst of them were hard fighters and keen sportsmen. It was good medieval folk-lore that if a woman wore men's clothes she could work witchcraft, as you can read in the report of the trial of Joan of Arc.

Here, too, is a note on their story in our last issue, which through my fault didn't get to our last Camp-Fire, and an item to add to the information on a still earlier story, the tale of Japan in the old days:

History says nothing of any secret league of Sicilian serfs, such as described in "The Quest of Gaimar the Grim," in the Reign of Roger II. But there were such secret societies on the island in ancient times, when Eunus the slave suddenly revealed himself as the head of a wide-spread brotherhood that rose at his word against their masters and defied the power of Rome for six years, till the insurrection was finally crushed by Publius Rupilius, the consul, in 132 B. C. In modern Sicily, there is still the Mafia, now degenerated into a semi-criminal organization, but which was founded about a century ago, after Napoleon had driven the Bourbon King of Naples to seek refuge in Sicily. Feudalism still existed there till the British, in return for the protection of their fleet, made Ferdinand IV grant a

constitution which abolished the feudal system in 1812. This deprived the armed retainers of the great land-owners of their livelihood, and most of them became brigands. Unable to surpress them, Ferdinand IV made them into a sort of mounted police, somewhat like the Mexican *rurales* of Don Porfirio Diaz, but without their discipline. In sheer self-defense, the poor people of the island founded the Mafia, which was at its inception just such a secret league as we have ascribed to *Gian the One-Handed*.—A. G. B.

I should like to add this note to our other short story: "*Two Strong Men*." We got our information about the Manila-Acapulco galleon from the unpublished Ph. D. thesis of Dr. William Lytle Schurz, of the University of Michigan, who has brought together a great mass of information on the subject as a result of years of research among the original Spanish sources in the Bancroft Collection at the University of California. This acknowledgement should be made, out of fairness to Dr. Schurz. We changed the date of the sea-fight in Urado Harbor from 1602 to 1592, in order to make it coincide with the tortoise-boat and Hideyoshi's Korean campaign; also, we gave the galleon a bigger and better armament than was customary. We fought her according to the rules laid down in that most useful and spirited little volume: "An Accidence or The Pathway to Experience necessary for all young sea-men . . . written by Captaine John Smith sometime Governor of Virginia and Admiral of New England," printed in London in 1626.—FARNHAM BISHOP.

SCALPING. I don't know why we've never happened to get on that subject before, but here we are now:

Salem, Ore.

I read Hugh Pendexter's story with great pleasure and noted the allusion to scalping in the Camp-Fire. As nearly as I was ever able to ascertain, only two persons were ever scalped in the old days on the Plains and lived to tell about it. One was a chief of the Crows, if I recall rightly, and the Sioux lifted his hair in an intertribal war.

THE other instance was the famous one of James Thompson, the English railroader. This occurred near what is now North Platte, Neb., in 1867, I think. He was shot from his perch on a telegraph-pole by a war party of Indians, and his scalp taken. The bullet which hit him in the head stunned him slightly, but he described the pain of the operation as terrible. The brave who mutilated him lost the first piece cut off, and came back and got another one. Thompson saw where the scalp lay and crawled over and secured it. He was rescued by a party from the fort near by, and finally recovered.

His scalp was placed on a wigmaker's stand in one of those glass bells that you formerly saw the flowers under in Uncle Allen's parlor, on the farm. The gruesome trophy was placed in the Public Library in Omaha, Neb., where I saw it some years since. Thompson was alive in England, I think, in 1907. I got the principal facts from his story in the *Wide World* in the same year. I have also read the article in a Nebraska daily paper of the old-timer who saw Thompson carrying his hair in a pail

of water down the streets of the town near the fort. It was later tanned, I heard.

THE reason that scalping was so fatal was the fact that blood-poisoning usually set in at once, due to the fearful lacerations and the condition of the knives used. The antiseptic treatment of wounds was of course not dreamed of in those days. It appears that it was, however, nothing unusual for a man to survive the actual scalping two or three days till the blood-poisoning had time to finish him.—D. WIGGINS.

FROM another of our writers' brigade at the front comes greeting to us. He's getting adventure at first-hand and on a large scale, and he seems to like it, but he's the writer still and while he does his bit he gathers grist for his "mill." I've sent him magazines, but he and his comrade can use many more.

I would have written you before this, but work of the most trying nature has prevented me from doing so. If the censor so wills, the next paragraph will go through to you, but if he says "No!" you'll then receive some ink-blackened lines instead.

Section 59-592, New York University Ambulance Company, U. S. A. A. S., is now officially attached to the French Army. Wherever our division, one of the most famous fighting divisions in the whole of the army, goes, we follow. Short stories and long stories, articles and books, poems and brief paragraphs have been written about the *poilus* of this division, and I am confident that they will hold a permanent place in the war writings of the world. For they turned back the Huns at the Marne. They were at Ypres. And their life-blood was spilled at Verdun. They have been at numerous other places, too, places made famous and never-to-be-forgotten by the biggest battles of this war.

And to think that we are a part of that division. Does that not sound like adventure?

Every other day I go out on an ambulance to a *Poste de Secours* (an infirmary) which is situated a short way behind the lines. I remain there with a driver until noon of the following day. We do little in the day, but are subjected to a great deal of night driving. And all of this without a single light—and within hearing of the Boches. More adventure.

I have one letter of twenty-one hundred words, entitled "Salvagers." So far I have been unable to mail the same to you. Censorship is the stumbling-block. Then, too, I am working on a new letter, "The Mad Adventure," in which I tell how a lieutenant, a section clerk, a cook who can not cook, an interpreter who did not interpret, a wheezy old Ford that coughed all the way, and a pay-roll that was all signed with the exception of two signatures, went up to the very mouth of the trenches—indeed, right into them—in search of two ambulance drivers who had gone promenading to the trenches, thus failing to sign the pay-roll. Some time I shall get this stuff through to you. Also, other letters, among them being "In the Red Cross House of François Lartigau."

I shall be glad to receive copies of *Adventure*, and I can assure you that it will be read from cover to

cover by all the members of the section. We receive little reading matter here.—CHARLES BROWN, JR.

FOLLOWING our Camp-Fire custom, with his first story in our magazine, Kingsbury Scott stands up and introduces himself to the rest of us:

Grand Haven, Mich.

I have written many thousands of words since I first saw the light of day in a sailor town on the east shore of Lake Michigan, but very few of those words have been about myself. My task has been to write of other people and other people's troubles. Because of the fact that I am a newspaper man I have seen more of troubles than has been good for me, perhaps. I have rather lived on the rim of adventure all my life, without having tumbled in very seriously. Naturally I have had many interesting experiences, which, however, would have no particular place here.

BORN in a sailor town in the tag end of the lumber days, my first memories are of the craft which sailed the lakes in the days when pine was king. There were the old steam-barges, with their deckloads piled high amidships, and long clean-looking schooners, with green hulls and white upper-works and with their bewhiskered skippers, who were lords of their own domain. Men were pretty well the masters of their own ships in those days. They were the judges of wind and weather and no one asked them to risk their ships if they did not deem it wise to cast off their moorings and sail away.

My father was a sailor. My first recollection of him is the best picture my mind retains of him. He was chief engineer and part owner of a lumber steamer and, as a little boy, I made many trips with him. I knew every man on board by his first name and my parents trusted me implicitly in the care of any one of them, from a deckhand to the skipper. Many times I clasped a big rough hand tightly on excursions through the lumber-yards "above the bridges" in Chicago.

All my life I have been in closest touch with lake craft and the men who sailed them. Though the men and the ships have changed greatly in the years, the hearts of "the boys" have remained the same. The wild ones keep on firing or decking until age and weakness retires them, without pay, and the steady ones become the masters or chief engineers of better ships. I have had the opportunity of observing these men closely, and I will say the great majority of them are pretty good chaps, with some few similar characteristics and a great many differing personalities. They are the sort I like to write about. In these men I have found my adventures.

FOR many years after quitting the lakes my father was United States steamboat inspector of the Lake Michigan east shore district, and his wide acquaintance with marine men brought me likewise into touch with them. By some queer turn Fate made me a landlubber, with sailor blood in my veins. Both of my brothers started out on the lakes, one to continue until he, too, became a chief engineer with a license which would make him the chief of any size ship on any ocean, the other to become a mill and ship operator himself. I

chose a profession new to the family. I became a newspaper man. Breaking in on a country daily, where shipping news was a feature, I went out at last for bigger game. I did the wharves for Milwaukee papers, and followed up with the shifts to other cities, a common trait of men of the game.

With the sea blood in me, with the memories of old time masters and mates and engineers stamped upon my brain, I had to have an outlet, so I began writing stories of the lakes and I discovered that there were magazines which would pay money for them. I have been at it more or less ever since.

I HAVE always felt that I knew intimately the men of the lakes, and the women who worried about them at home, when the Fall storms came. My father's house faced the harbor and I spent many an idle hour watching the ships slip past. From the upper windows I could see old Lake Michigan rolling in to the white sandy beach, and the roar of the breakers has sounded in my ears many nights as I lay staring into the darkness. One day I stood beside my mother in our upper lookout window and watched a fine big schooner come rushing in to her doom on the beach. I saw her spars fall as the combers conquered her at last and I heard my mother sigh for the poor souls whose lives were in danger. That was in the long ago, but incidents such as these, together with the traditions of ships, which surround every sailor's town, could not fail to leave impressions upon a young mind.

A LOVE for the marine has kept me always within the sound of the deep-throated steamer whistles. I have always come back to the water, because I have felt that life was not worth living away from it. I hope I shall always be able to see a ship when I want to. I like to smoke a pipe with the skipper up in his room in the "texas." I like to get down in the engine-room, with the chief or the assistants, where the oils have a comfortable fragrance, where the dynamos hum, and the fans pull the cool air down through the ventilators. I like the steamy smell of the place. I like to get a whiff of the galley, if the cook is good-natured. In fact, I like a steamboat or a schooner from end to end and she's like home to me even if I've never seen her before.—KINGSBURY SCOTT.

IN CONNECTION with his story in this number, Thomas Samson Miller says "The Tailed Giants of the Pagan Belt are not fabulous creatures but are mentioned in the report of the Alexander-Gosling Expedition."

And it happens that, nearly seven years ago, when we were just beginning to get our readers and writers into touch with each other by asking the latter to give us full accounts of themselves, Mr. Miller was one of those who responded in good comradeship and was also one of two or three whose responses got into a cranny of my detail-laden desk and then into a cranny elsewhere and—has never been given to you, although I thought it had. (I must

seem, from this and other instances confessed to, a careless kind of person. Well, maybe, and yet if you were to have a few weeks on this job I think you would judge me gently.)

Anyhow, here is Mr. Miller's account of himself, written back in 1911 for us of the Camp-Fire.

SEE a boy in class gazing, not at the blackboard, but beyond to the wall map—tracing out bays, continents, seas, capes, mountains—the big, wide world outside his little country village, and longing for that outer world—hungering for it. To find poetry in geography; to devour stories of other climes and races; to find a hayrick and, sprawled on his stomach, give his soul to the wonders of Robinson Crusoe; or to climb the highest hills, to look at the world beyond—a glimpse of the English Channel—scintillating, silvery highway to that Beyond; perhaps a liner's smoke trailed against the sky, and, oh, how the heart followed that liner into the western horizon!

BUT how to escape the commonplace—in my case, tight, tamed, policed little England? Was there a chance I did not try, an advertisement I did not answer, a relative I did not bother? The disappointments of those early years—till I stood one day in the scrumptious offices of the Royal Niger Chartered Company and signed a contract (every clause of which spelled Romance). So eager was I that I bluffed two years on my age to fill the requirements of the contract. Read for yourselves part of those clauses that lured me from clean bed and roof for—

(9) Mr. Thomas Samson Miller agrees to communicate to the aforesaid Company any discoveries of pecuniary value made by him or any knowledge whatsoever that he may acquire directly or indirectly in the Nigerian sphere (as set forth by the Anglo-German, French and Portuguese treaties and boundaries commissions of the years. . . . That any presents given to him by emir, sultan, chief or lesser dignity shall be the property of said Company. . . .

(15) That he understands the wild nature of the country designated the Nigerian sphere and absolves the Company from all responsibility whatsoever for death or accident. . . . That he understands and signs with full knowledge of the unhealthy climate and that the Company is not responsible for failure to provide, though they agree wherever possible, to transport, feed and house said Thomas Samson Miller as befits his station. . . .

Africa! the very word spelled romance, adventure, glory.

I SIGNED blithely, and shook hands with a real earl, not to mention lesser lords on the directorate, and stepped aboard a West African liner at Liverpool with the emotions of a Raleigh, Columbus, Livingston concentrated in one bosom. Not even the doleful tales of the ship's officers of the palm-oil rufianism, fever, savages and mosquitoes could damp a young fool's ardor for the unknown. Not even Mary Kingsley's taffrail-explored and deck-written book of horrors of West Africa could spoil dreams. I rather think my buoyancy got on

the nerves of the Old Coasters, for they sure did sling it into me in that little smoking town—such stories of cannibalism, privations, savagery! It was their fun. Blessed was my armor of ignorance.

THERE are landmarks in all lives. That first sight of Africa! I was up at daybreak, waiting for the lookouts cry of "Land!" It was Mount Teneriffe, by the way, my first mountain. How foolish it made the home hills. And, oh, that landing! The chatter of foreign tongues, the little brown urchins who smoked cigarets as if to the manner born; the strange fruits and stranger flowers; the swarthy faces; the sun (later I was to know that bald, blistering African sun only too well); the curious customs. And the meeting in hotels and *palios* of men who did things—men of the outer world, who spoke in half-sentences and seemed to say more in a half-nod or elevation of the eyebrows than we stay-at-home mortals say in a laborious paragraph.

And then the slow voyage down the Gold Coast—the oily calms, splashed with flying-fish and dolphins, not to mention open-mouthed voracious sharks; the crazy little, smelling, barbarian villages on the bleached shore, until we steamed into the Niger Delta, and coconut trees, monkeys, pythons and hippopotamuses were not behind bars. Now the history of the next few years—its aches and pains, transports and adventures; its strange animals and stranger animal-men are set forth in my stories.

WELL, there it is, I have been writing and journeying ever since. A rolling stone gathers no moss, maybe, but it keeps shiny and clean. This globe-trotting is a disease; ever it is mountains and plains; sea coast and inland prairies; mighty rivers and mightier deserts, and new faces all the time, not to say new friends. Sometimes I hit the cities, only to revolt quickly from collars and cuffs, three meals a day and the daily newspaper:

Nor does it cost much, this bumming around, not when you know how—not when you ship overboard the prejudices for sheeted beds, clothes and accustomed foods—not when you learn to do in Rome as Rome does—to eat spaghetti in Italy, garlic and olives in Spain, tortillas in Mexico, the "damper" in Australia, manioc bread on the Guinea Coast, dates in the Sahara and flapjacks in a lumber-camp. Ship overboard the prejudices and superfluities of civilization and you know what real freedom is.

I LIKE the schooling of the outer world—am thankful for the medicinal value of hunger (by the way, and it is curious, one never hungers in a barbarian community; the mealie-pot and camp-fire are almost always free to the stranger of right approach; it is in the big cities of civilization that one hungers if he hasn't the price)—I like hunger for the dreams it brings; I like hardship for the ache in the bones and the deep sleep it brings; and am glad for the mighty poetry of tornadoes, sandstorms, madcap seas, cloudbursts, electric storms, meteors; the heave of the deep sea, and above all the still voice of the solitudes.

SO IT is I lay aside my writing for spells, and find myself hidden in the forest with the bark-peelers, or working long, laborious healthy days in a lumber-mill, and recently there was a trip to China in the engine-room, my friend the chief engineer

having made an oiler of me pro tem. Then there were orange-picking days in Southern California, with a gang of Japs, where I discovered that there is a Jap Question. Picking oranges has a flavor of the poetical about it, but is tedious work and not to be thought of with cement mixing, which had fallen to my lot.

AND the stories these experiences have given me. On my left forearm is a scar where a turbaned mahdi up in Sokoto (on the caravan route to Timbuctoo) thought to rid the world of at least one Dog-of-a-Swine-Eating Christian. Up in British Columbia is a mine I staked—the stakes are there yet, perhaps, as are the two Chinamen still panning gold out of the Columbia with the infinite patience of their race, sometimes panning a dollar a day, sometimes three. From there I tramped through Oregon a no-account remittance man (it is a mystery to me however the remittance man was so long the hero of popular fiction.) In those days we found an alfalfa stack for bed, the blue sky for roof, a loaf of bread with "swiped" peaches to moisten it down for food, and snatches from Verdi with stanzas from Omar to feed our dreams. My fingers fairly itch to write the hobo's vindication.

I RECALL a peaceful month of Fall plowing on Manitoba's undulating prairies. The quiet joy of those open spaces are still. And how my team—four real Canadian horses—and I got to know each other. What frolic and character there were in those four, Jerry, Madge, Prince and Minna! I have ever been happiest in overalls, and always out-of-doors.

I WAS the other day crossing the San Francisco-Oakland Ferry at the hour of the evening rush of homebound commuters. I saw an *Adventure* in the lap of a tired little stenographer, open at one of my own stories. She was rounding a day of key-pounding with half an hour in Africa. I watched her snapping eyes and glowing face as she followed the adventure and love to its climax, then closed the magazine and came back to the crowded, hustling every-day commonplace. Is it not a power and a pleasure to be able to take people out of themselves, and sometimes, in a sly way, educate, or proclaim some wrong? A writer dearly loves to preach; so look for the pill in the jam—the sermon under the love-story.

I BELIEVE one good story harvests more good than a hundred ephemeral sermons. I never met a lover of good reading who was a degenerate. Get a good magazine in your hands and you are getting more for the money than anything else offers.

WHEN Gordon McCreagh writes about air-men, as he does in this issue, he does so at first-hand, through experience in the U. S. N. R. aviation service. When you think of it, there is something startling in a change from jungle-tracking in primitive Burma to handling in America a flying-machine typical of the utmost advance in modern science and civilization.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMANN.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card*—not in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

Will sell: Nov., Dec., 1910; All of 1911, 1912, 1916, 1917—15 cents per copy, prepaid in U. S. A. Postage stamps accepted.—H. H. NORTHERUP, L. Box 29, North Freedom, Wisconsin.

Will sell: Jan., 1911, to May, 1916 inclusive, at 15 cents per copy. November, 1916, to date at 10 cents. Or \$10.50 for the lot.—HARRY A. CLARIDGE, Milton, Ontario, Canada.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask *Adventure*" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Letter-Friends Back Home

A Free Service Department for American, Canadian, and Other Allied Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Others in Camp or at the Front.

Any one in the United States or Allied service who wishes to brighten the time with letters from "back home" or wherever else this magazine circulates, and with the personal touch and interest of hitherto unknown friends, can secure these letters and these friends by sending us his name and military address to be published once in this department as soon as censorship of soldiers' foreign addresses permits. In the meantime his address can be printed as "care *Adventure*," letters to be forwarded at once by us to the military address he gives us in confidence. Among our readers of both sexes, all classes and from all parts of the world, he is likely to gain a number of friendly, personal correspondents. He is free to answer only such as he is comfortably able to answer under the conditions that surround him, and it is even suggested that the number of correspondents for any one man be determined by the needs of his comrades as well as by his own.

This magazine, of course, assumes no responsibility other than the publishing of these names and addresses as its space will permit. Experience has shown that the service offered is a very real and needed one, and all not themselves in service are asked to do their part in making the daily life of those fighting in our defense brighter and pleasanter through personal friendships across the intervening miles and by whatever personal, human kindnesses such friendships may suggest.

When giving your military address make it as permanent as one as possible.

(As the magazine is made up several months in advance, the above notice will appear with only such stray names as happen to come in to us until there has been time for it to reach the camps and the front and for names and addresses to reach us, be put in type and then reach our readers on publication.)

W. H. JACKSON, U. S. S. *Massachusetts*, care of Postmaster, New York City.

W. J. CHAPPELL, U. S. S. *Massachusetts*, care of Postmaster, New York City.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask *Adventure*.")



A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.
2. Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.
3. No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.
5. Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.

1. Islands and Coasts

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1

J. P. TUCKER, Hotel Lansdale, 1410 Minor Ave., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and scafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Tucker.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2

HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1

E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2

CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3 and Mexico Part 1

J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2

J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1

ROBERT E. PINKERTON, care of Starbuck Ranch, Morrison, Colo. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★North American Snow Countries Part 2

S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★North American Snow Countries Part 3

GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4

ED. L. CARSON, Arlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China

F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

★(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)

Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

17. Central America

EDGAR YOUNG, 415 Eighth Ave., Huntington, West Va. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern

GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports: hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea

ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia

CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1

THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2

GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa

R. W. WABING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada, covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo

CHARLES BEADLE, Grand Isle, Louisiana. Covering geography, hunting, equipment. Also African superstitions.

★ (Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)

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Australia and New Zealand

Question:—"I have knocked around since my twelfth birthday—I am now twenty-eight—and have covered Canada, Mexico and the States pretty thoroughly. I have punched cows, herded sheep, put in a hitch in the regular Army and a short time in the Canadian regulars. I have been under fire in the course of our southern neighbor's numerous disputes and left a couple of fingers for some of Madero's men to pick up near Cananea. In the course of my batting around I have managed to acquire a pretty useful commercial education and am at the present time private secretary to the sales manager of the largest builders' hardware manufacturer in the States. Naturally, I am able to handle a gun with results more serious to whatever is in front of said gun than to those behind it, and I also know a little bit about matters which come in handy in the 'outlands.'

"What I would like to have is the names and addresses of the proper people to apply to for chances with trading concerns operating in the South Seas. I am looking for a proposition which pays a half-yearly decent salary and at the same time offers what most positions in this section do not offer—a chance to share in the results produced by my own energy. I am not at all choice in the matter of lines, as anything that offers an opportunity will be welcome.

"I will also say that a mild case of flat feet and the missing thumb and index finger on my left hand have barred me from both the Canadian and American military service, so that I do not fit in the

trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa

TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania

ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

slacker class and am not seeking to avoid service in strafing the Hun."——, New Haven, Conn.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—There is lots of room on top. The hustler will get along as successfully in the South Seas as in any other locality—perhaps more so, because there is less competition. I take it that you desire to combine the pleasure of adventuring with the make-it-pay business of life. Why not? What I would suggest is that you might get a group of good agencies and come out to Australia and New Zealand as the traveling representative of the manufacturers.

American tools and hardware, for instance, are popular out here; and therefore you need go no further than your present house for one line. You can mix your lines, so as to suit the versatile Australasian taste. You could headquarter at Sydney—New South Wales—whence you are within a day of Melbourne, four days from New Zealand—Wellington is our capital city—and from Sydney you have steamer services to take you right through the South Sea islands, where you can again combine the pleasure of traveling with business.

This line of life would give you full profit for your energy, and would give you the opportunity for realizing your desire for profit-sharing. Since the United States came into the war American goods have taken a jump in popular demand in Australia and New Zealand. After the war there will be a readjustment of trading, with the shutting out of German and Austrian goods. The South Sea

Islands will also be wide open for the hustler.

So here is your chance. I think this suggestion to come out on your own better than recommending the names of firms at this end. But if this is worthy of developing, by all means write me and I'll inform you to the best of my ability. You and your partner would certainly enjoy the free and wide-open life of Australasia.—KIG ORO!

Radio Operators

Question:—"I would like some information regarding radio operators in the merchant service, as to pay, chance for promotion, eating and sleeping accommodations, hours per day, etc. Where can I get information concerning radio operators in the signal corps of the U. S. Army?"—L. T. J., Northumberland, Pa.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—Your second query may be disposed of first by simply directing you to the nearest recruiting station, where you can get all the information you need regarding the signal corps of the Army.

The radio operators of the mercantile fleet are rated as officers, on about the grade of second mates. I can not definitely state the pay they get now; but before the war, and at least for some time after—that is, before America chipped in—wireless men received anywhere from seventy-five to a hundred and fifty dollars a month, according to class and size of ship, and whether they worked single-handed or with a watch-mate. Now, I believe the pay is higher. Perhaps you could get a more definite statement as to present wages by writing the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company, Woolworth Building, New York.

The chances of promotion are more difficult still to define, since there is no rating to aim for other than a similar one in perhaps a bigger ship. Then the move is scarcely promotion, because you are still a radio operator, though at a higher rate of pay maybe.

Eating and sleeping accommodations are good. A wireless man has his own cabin, and eats at the officers' mess in some passenger ships, in the saloon with the captain in some other steamers. But in no case does the radio operator fare worse than the officers.

Hours per day vary according to whether there are one or two operators on board. The receiving of messages knows no hours. Whenever they come they must be taken. But taken all in all, the wireless man has a fairly good time of it. All the feverish talk about the wireless hero who sticks to his post sending out messages to the last, is chiefly hysterical "bunk": just as long as it is possible for the operator to use his apparatus, he is in nothing like the danger that the entire engine-room and fire-room staffs are. With extremely few exceptions, there is no danger for the wireless man while it remains possible to send out messages.

I'm sorry I can not give you more detailed data on pay; but I feel sure you can get all this, and more, by applying to the wireless company mentioned above. There is yet another way of getting the rates of payment, if you care to try it. Write to any of the many correspondence schools, asking for information regarding the radio operator's work and wages; they will furnish you with all the dope, hoping to get your fee for the course. Of course, I

don't advise you taking the course, nor do I name any school. I simply state what I believe to be a way for you to secure data you need.

Lumbering in Brazil

Question:—"I want some information about Brazil. I have twenty years' experience as master and pilot and as manager of hardwood sawmills. Am able to get complete crew to go to Brazil with me that will take a tract of timber, clear up the land, manufacture timber into lumber, make all sales and put land under cultivation. Am looking for some one down there who has the timber and land with money to finance this outfit and will give us a chance to make some real money. We believe in Brazil!"—W. T. CAMPBELL, Vicksburg, Miss.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—The biggest sawmilling outfit in Brazil is the Southern Brazil Lumber Co., Caixa do Correio "D", Curitiba, Parana, Brazil. They own tracts of land in the southern part of Brazil as large as some of our smaller States. They have one of the largest band mills in the world operating at a place called Tres Barros, up the Yguazu River. They own and operate their own river-boats, railroads into the woods, etc. They are cutting hard pine—it's like oak, you wouldn't know it after it was cut—and a mahogany sort of wood called "Imbuha." This hard pine will not float.

Some of the men who helped build this mill came down there from near you—you might know them—and they were acquiring all the land near them in 1910. The New York office of this company is located at 25 Broad Street.

If you wrote them that you were prepared to go down there with a full outfit they might make you an offer. You have it right—*Brazil is going to boom soon*. If you can't arrange anything from this end, why not take a trip down there? Go to New Orleans, then to Colon, and from there to Barbados and get a Lamport and Holt boat to Rio. From Rio go to Sao Paulo. There is an American-owned railroad from there clear to the southern boundary. You go to Punta Grosso and take a branch from there to Curitiba. You can get to make a trip up the river from near there on one of their river-boats and see what is being done.

I am sure you can get a tract of land from the Government. In Rio try to get hold of some of their American agricultural experts and meet some of the Government officials.

West African Prospects

Question:—"How can I gain an outdoor position in West Africa, and what are the prospects there for a man with a little money? Kindly cover expense and route necessary to get there. I have a good education, know something about herding, trading, etc."—JOS. P. LAWRENCE, Bridgeport, Conn.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—West Africa is not a field for business for men of small capital. The general trade is in rubber, ivory, palm kernels—for palm oil—gums, spices, skins, and there is a market for wild animals, but the last mentioned takes an experienced man.

It would cost via Liverpool from a hundred and fifty to three hundred dollars to make Sierra Leone or the Niger, according to the class of travel. One

can get almost anything one wants at the African stores, and it is always best to buy on the spot. There are many mining companies, gold and tin, but I haven't the names and addresses. Of the commercial companies the most likely are: The Niger Company, Thames Embankment, London; John Holt Company, Liverpool; The Elder Dempster Steamship Co., Liverpool.

You might write them stating your qualifications and asking employment. The usual contract calls for three years' service, which is about as much as a white can stand of the climate at one jolt. There is no "herding" or ranching, though there are a few coffee plantations. The rubber grows wild. The conditions are much like what America was when the Indians ran wild and the whites made small settlements, excepting that the whites came to America to colonize, whereas in West Africa they go only for short periods.

The large trading companies have small shipyards and machine shops, river boats and canoe fleets and use native labor for all the common work and native crews, but always there's a white in charge. The agents at the trading stations are white, and must know a little bookkeeping and be patient and tactful with the blacks.

Horsebacking Through Arizona and New Mexico

Question:—"What kind of clothes are best to take on a six-months' horseback trip along the southern border of Arizona and New Mexico? What would a horse cost down there? What would be the most

advisable revolver to take?"—T. BRUCKNER, New York, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—If I were starting on a six-months' trip along the border I would get a suit of Army khaki for hot weather, a pair of corduroy riding-breeches and coat for the cool weather. You can wear boots or shoes with puttees. A hat something after the style of the Service hat is fine. You can roll your extra clothes small and have a drawstring bag to put them in, to keep the dust off.

Or you can take just the corduroys and ride coatless when hot, as the average man does. Chances are you won't see a coat in many a day's ride, unless you see it strapped back of a saddle, but you should have one. Fall and Spring are sometimes stormy as the deuce down there.

I have known a man to ride clear across both States with only coat and trousers of a suit, no vest, and one blanket. You might want to be fixed to make a change now and then, so the khaki would come in nicely.

I do not know what a horse would cost you now, since the Army has taken so many and shoved prices up.

I should say that a Smith & Wesson .38 Special, with military handle would about fill the bill. It carries enough lead to give shocking power, is splendidly accurate, and the shells are much cheaper than the larger calibers. Also, when you run up to a .44-40 or .45 Service gun, you will tear anything you hit into fragments. I had a pair of .44s which did good service for years, but now I stick to a .32-20, as I shoot only small game with the belt-gun. I have known deer to be killed with the .38 Special, two by the same man, on Mt. Wilson, near here.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE:—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN OUT OF EVERY FIVE OF ALL THOSE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS

YOUNG, WILLIAM McKINLEY (Frank Nie). 17 years old, tall for age, weight about 128 pounds, brown hair, blue eyes, fair complexion and deep dimples in his cheeks. Last heard from at Callander, Ont., where he worked at Smith's Mills. Left there on Dec. 19th last saying he was going to Welland, Ont. If any of the boys who worked with him see this I wish they would send me any information they can concerning my boy.—Address Mrs. CLARA YOUNG, 45 Cypress St., Buffalo, N. Y.

CASTLE, EDWARD MOSES. A surgeon and M. D., born at Binghamton, N. Y., 1864, son of Theo H. Castle, supposed to have become a British subject; last heard from at Burlington, Canada, letters unanswered, and had been sick with blood poison. Any one having knowledge of him please advise niece.—Address Mrs. ISABELLA PERRY WOOD, Dresden, Yates Co., N. Y.

CARROLL, JAMES W. Brother. Born and raised at St. Clair, Hawkins Co., Tenn. Last heard from at Ardmore, Ind., about 18 or 20 years ago. Has dark hair, blue eyes, tall, was slim. Both arms are crooked from being broken. He is about 45 years old, has very high forehead, square, and projecting eyes, deep set; very good education.—Address IDA R. HAMBLIN, Box 25, Greenville, Tenn.

SHARROCK, JOSEPH P. About 65 years old, 5 ft. 10 in. tall, 165 lbs., hair and mustache black, shot with gray. Last heard from in Fairport or Walworth, N. Y. Fall of 1917. His son Edward M. Sharrock, Private No. 2,075,351 D Co., 13th Canadian Battalion B. E. F., France, very anxious to hear from father or advise whereabouts.—Address JAY C. O'BRIEN, R. F. D. No. 293, Blossom Rd., Brighton, N. Y.

POYNTER, LOUIS, last heard from he left Cincinnati, Ohio, in April 1902, for Birmingham, Ala. Was a railroad brakeman. About 5 ft. 11 in. tall, blue eyes, sandy hair, is now about 46 years old.—Address L. V., Box 442, Elma, Washington.

COPP, Ed., last heard of in State of Pennsylvania three years ago. Wish to learn his present whereabouts.—Address PRIVATE FLOYD G. NESTES, Headquarters Co., 150 Infy., Camp Shelby, Miss.

SHANNON, WILLIAM (Uncle), JAMES SHANNON (Father). Last heard of in Winnipeg, Canada. Please communicate with me. I need one of you as I am all alone now. Mother is dead.—Address MARGARET SHANNON, 334 East 51st St., New York City, care of Mrs. L. ORPEN.

STROMAN, EDWIN F. (Chey), last heard of in Akron, Ohio, Winter of 1914-15. Write to your old pal Fowler.—Address W. J. FOWLER, 167 Sands St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

CURTISS, MARION, lived at 1720 University Ave., San Diego, Calif., in 1917.—Address "BANTY" care *Adventure*.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

HARMON, H. E., last heard of was leaving Rush Springs Oklahoma, for Kingfisher, Oklahoma. Any information would be gratefully accepted pertaining to his whereabouts or if dead or alive.—Address H. H. HEWETT, care of U. S. R. S., Rimrock, Wash.

WEIL, GUSTAV, was employed as a doctor's helper in hospital. Is short and has dark eyes and complexion and talks broken English.—Address 365, care of *Adventure*.

KLEINLE, ERVING LOUIS, brother, last heard of in Seattle, Wash., where his term in the U. S. Navy expired two years ago.—Address CLIFFORD W. KLEINLE, Rm. 2929, Equitable Bldg., New York City.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MOOMAW, ARTHUR and EUGENE MOOMAW, last heard from in Kansas two or three years ago.—Address MRS. PEARL HASWELL (sister), 1001 St. Louis St., Dallas, Texas.

McCORD, JOHN. Last seen at Central Station, Chicago, on June 30, 1917. Has relatives in Polson City, Montana, or Louisville, Ky. Was employed as candy maker. Any information will be thankfully received.—Address HAROLD K. MCKAY, 34 Close Avenue, Toronto, Canada.

CHARE, ROSE (Sister), last heard of 27 years ago in Colorado. She may be married now.—Address Mrs. MARGARET BRENNAN, Manson, Ia.

KELLY, R. E. Please send me your present address. Letters forwarded you to Sherman were returned.—Address A. L. B., 715 W. Chestnut St., Denison, Texas.

SLAVIN, CORP. J. DALLAS, or any of the five who accompanied him on bombing expedition at Vimy Ridge on March 16, 1917, or any one knowing the fate of the expedition.—Address 364, care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in full, in either the First May or Mid-May issues of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

BRANOCK, RAY; Brigman, B. F.; Branscombe, Earl; Butts, Chester H.; Chamberlain, Carl D.; Clich; Couth, Mrs. Mary; Cranston, Arthur A.; Cross, Horace Keith; Daniel, John B.; Devers, L. W.; Ellis, Lloyd W.; Gambrell, Theodore Chas.; Gilmore, Edw. E.; Goodwill, Clifton C.; Karoko, Peter; Kline, Paul A.; Lacy, James E.; Lessnaw, Joe.; McGown, Mackie; McNaulty, Francis; Menk, William; Millenhauer, Percy C.; Mirovoye, John; Nelson, Earl; Nuzum, John; Osborn, Lester E.; Pierce, Leighton; Smith, George; Vinson, Edward; Whitlock, George W. (Sticks); Young, A. C.

MISCELLANEOUS—Attention Boys of the 213 O. S. Batt. C. E. F., American Legion; MacBournie, Ernest; Aubrey, Eddie, Gordon, Frank and Hattie; members of Utah's Old Signal Gang. Also men in Russian transport service; relatives of John Palmer.

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Lee Hays; Jack P. Robinson.

NUMBERS L. T. 284, C. 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Ten more stories besides the two in the ad on page 2—and each one breathing of the great adventures out-of-doors. In the Mid-June Number, in your hands on May 18th, you will find:

The Bound Twigs By L. Patrick Greene
A story of the African villages where *McLeffe*, the chief, and *Zari*, the witch-doctor, hold sway.

The Serpent's Phrase By Gordon Young
It is only a little phrase—honeyed sweetness—yet many a man has gone to his doom by it.

Monkeying with Ancestors By W. C. Tuttle
When the Piperock cow-punchers monkey with the Darwinian theory things happen quick.

The Real Sport By George L. Catton and Harry Moore
A story of the North Woods—and the "sports" you find there.

Will of the Wasp By Hugh S. Miller
A story of the sea, and one of the unusual ships which sail upon it.

Red Acadia Part III By J. U. Giers
In the third part of this thrilling story *White Wolf* puts his plan into action—but receives no thanks from *Elliott*.

Danger Trail By Robert J. Pearsall
All the Philippine trails were dangerous after the Spanish War—but this one had only two soldiers on it.

The Luck of Forty-Four By Ruby Erwin Livingston
Forty-Four is a rascal—no doubt of it—yet we think you'll like him.

The Gooseyoke Returns a Call By E. E. Harriman
A story of the Mexican border and the quick way in which the cattlemen meet their social obligations.

Pierre de Jon—Vagabond By Hiram Cornell Fuk
Back to old France this story takes you—to meet the French Robin Hood.

MID-JUNE ADVENTURE



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New York, N. Y.



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"KULTUR HAS PASSED HERE"

Drawing by Louis Raemaekers

How the bogey of the *franc-tireur* was fostered by the Germans to excuse their own "retaliation."

What happened to the Belgian town of Visé, not one of whose four thousand citizens is left—where there is not a roof nor a house left standing.

The massacre at Dinant, where six hundred civilians, in age from infancy to fourscore, were shot down in the presence of their relatives and friends.

The story of Madame Tielemans, wife of the Burgomaster of Aerschot.

The fate of Tamines, where the village graveyard is thick with wooden crosses bearing the same date—August 22, 1914. The victims' ages ranged from 13 to 84.

A translation of the phrase-book carried by German soldiers, coupled with other evidence that the atrocities were the logical outcome of the German philosophy of war.

Mr. Whitlock's exposé of the German White Book, published to justify the deeds of the German army in Belgium.

The Naked Truth About German Atrocities

Brand Whitlock, United States Minister to Belgium, remained in Brussels during the German reign of terror and until our entrance into the war forced his removal to France.

At his present post in Havre he is writing the first complete story of the scenes of blood and fire that marked the trail of the German invader.

From the thousands of incidents of incredible savagery that were reported to him, Mr. Whitlock has selected only such as have been admitted and proved.

With them he pieces together a horrible but convincing and final account of the atrocities perpetrated upon non-combatants—defenseless women, children, clergy and aged civilians—within a few miles of the American legation.

The most pitiful and stirring instalment of Mr. Whitlock's narrative, illustrated from photographs and with drawings by Louis Raemaekers, appears in the May issue of

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